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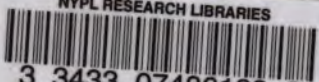
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WASHINGTON IRVING'S NEW WORK.

CAREY, LEA & BLANCHARD

HAVE AT PRESS, AND WILL SHORTLY PUBLISH,

IN TWO HANDSOME VOLUMES :

A S T O R I A ;

OR,

ANECDOTES OF AN ENTERPRISE BEYOND THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

By Washington Irving.

Extract from the Introduction.

“The work I here present to the public, is necessarily of a rambling and somewhat disjointed nature, comprising various expeditions and adventures by land and sea. The facts, however, will prove to be linked and banded together by one grand scheme, devised and conducted by a master-spirit; one set of characters, also, continues throughout, appearing occasionally, though sometimes at long intervals, and the whole enterprise winds up by a regular catastrophe; so that the work, without any laboured attempt at artificial construction, actually possesses much of that unity so much sought after in works of fiction, and considered so important to the interest of every history.”

THE FOLLOWING NOTICE OF

"RATTLIN, THE REEFER,"

Is copied from the last No. of the London Spectator.

"On the title page, this work professes to be only "edited" by Captain Marryatt, and this idea is enforced by a side wind in the Advertisement. The book itself, however, leaves little doubt of its paternity. It exhibits the humour, point, and tenderness of the author of "Peter Simple;" his nice perception of character, and power of representing it; as well as his plain, but strong and truthful style of description and narration, intermingled occasionally, with sarcastic or sagacious reflection. But for these characteristics a doubt might have arisen. In some parts the author takes upon himself the function of a preacher; in others of a moralist: anon he ventures in sentiment or romance; and once or twice rises into the lyrist. All these things are on the surface. If "Rattlin the Reefer," be examined with a close and a nice scrutiny, it will be found to bear a family likeness to its elder brethren—it is the same, yet another. The framework, like "Jacob Faithful," "Peter Simple," and "Japhet in search of a Father," is an autobiography; and like the heroes of those works, Rattlin is conducted through the adventures of youth and boyhood with no more essential variation than arises from the different nature of the scenes and incidents."

P. J. Thompson

R A T T L I N,
T H E R E E F E R .

EDITED BY
THE AUTHOR OF "PETER SIMPLE."

"All hands REEF topsails—Away, aloft!"

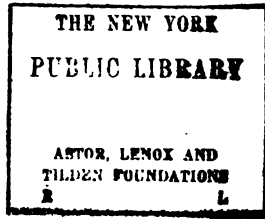
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA :
CAREY, LEA & BLANCHARD.

1836.

with the 1st 1. 1.



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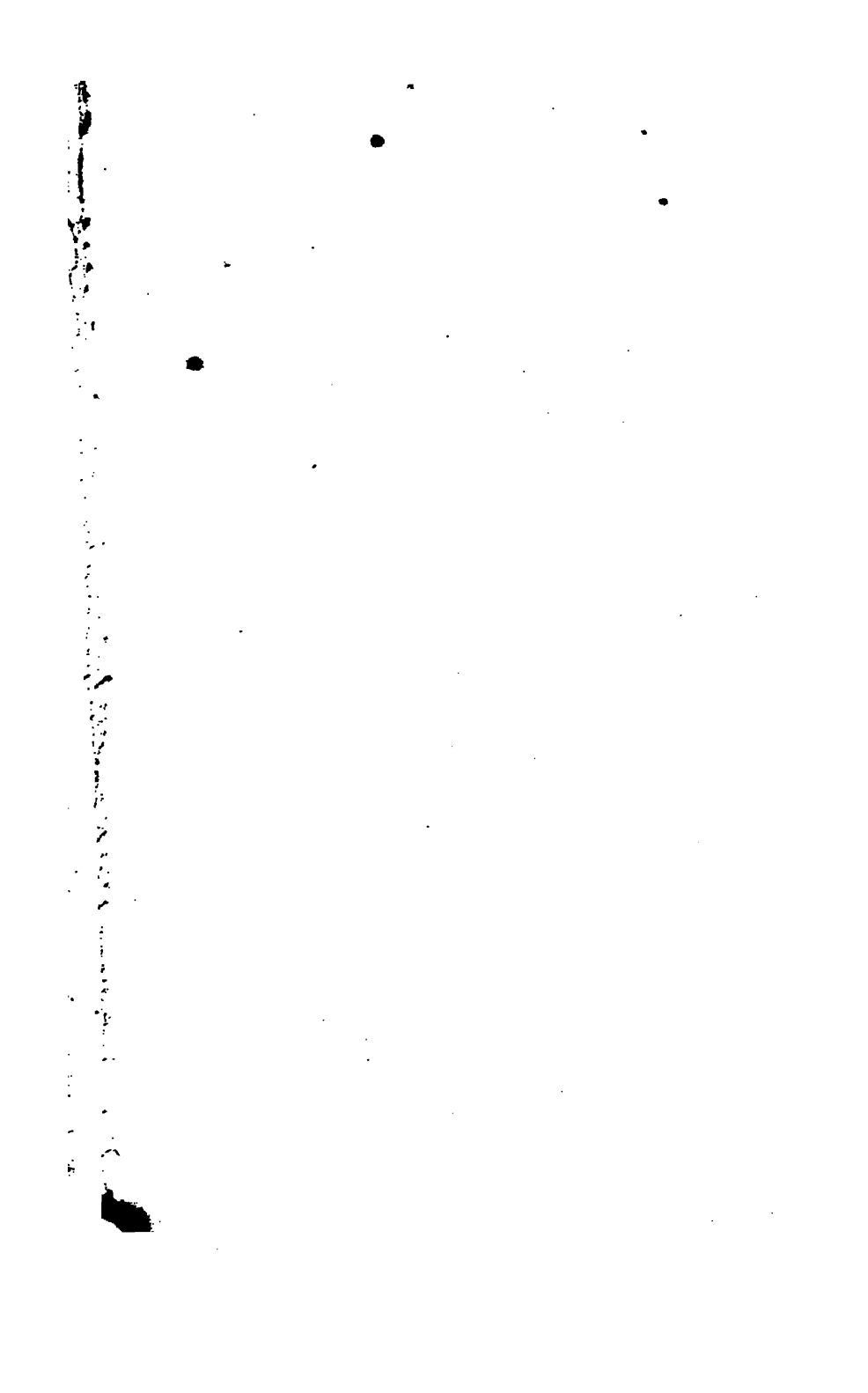
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RATTLIN, THE REEFER.

CHAPTER I.

Ralph maketh acquaintance with bloody instruments, and boweth to the iron messenger of death; and is taught to stand fire, by being knocked down.

WE now pressed the ship with every stitch of canvass that we could set. We had already learned the name of our friend in the distance; it was the *Jean Bart*. Indeed, at this time, almost every fourth French vessel in those seas, if its occupation was the cutting of throats, was a "*Jean Bart*." However, *Jean Bart*, long before we had done with the *Prince William*, had spread a cloud of canvass, a dark one it is true, and had considerably increased his distance from us. It was a chase dead before the wind. By nine o'clock the breeze had freshened. I don't know how it could be otherwise, considering the abundance of wishing and votive whistling. At ten, we got a good sight of Johnny Crapaud's hull from the maintop, and found out that she was no frigate. I was not at all nervous before, but I must confess, at this certainty, my courage rose considerably. I narrowly inspected the condition of the four after-quarter-deck guns, my charge, and was very impres-

sive on the powder-boys as to the necessity of activity, coolness, and presence of mind.

Dr. Thompson now came on deck, very much lamenting the disordered rites of his breakfast. The jocular fellow invited me down into the cockpit to see his preparations, in order, as he said, to keep up my spirits, by showing me what excellent arrangements he had made for trepanning my skull, or lopping my leg, should any accident happen to me. I attended him. What with the fearnought* screens, and other precautions against fire, it was certainly the hottest place in which I had yet ever been. The dim yellow, yet sufficient light from the lanterns, gave a lurid horror to the various ghastly and blood-greedy instruments that were ostentatiously displayed upon the platform. Crooked knives, that the eye alone assured you were sharp, seemed to be twisting with a living anxiety to embrace and separate your flesh; and saws appeared to grin at me, which to look upon, knowing their horrid office, actually turned my teeth on edge. There were the three assistant surgeons, stripped to their shirts, with their sleeves tucked up ready, looking anxious, keen, and something terrified. As to the burley doctor, with his huge, round, red face, and his coarse jokes, he abstracted something from the romantic terrors of the place; but added considerably to the disgust it excited, as he strongly reminded me of a carcase butcher in full practice.

No doubt, his amiable purpose, in bringing me to this den, was to frighten me, and enjoy my fright. Be that as it may, I took the matter as coolly as the heat of the place would permit me. The first lesson in bravery is to assume the appearance of it; the second to sustain the appearance, and the third will find you with all that courage "that doth become a man."

By noon we had a staggering breeze. We could now perceive that we were chasing a large corvette, though from the end-on view we had of her, we could not count her ports. The Eos seemed to fly through the water. She bowed not to the waves before her, but dashed them indignantly aside. She appeared, in her majestic spirit, to say to the winds, "I obey not your impulse. I await not your assistance. I lead you. Follow." To the sea, "Level before me your puny waves. Let them rush after in my path—let them bow down as I pass on." To the clouds, "Come, we will run a race—we will strive together in the pride of our speed. The far-off isles of the south shall be our goal, and the rainbow the coronet of triumph." Well she bore herself and right gallantly on that day.

* An amazingly thick cloth, of a woollen texture.

At one o'clock the spars began to complain—preventer braces were rove, but no one thought of shortening sail. Away! away! Is not this hunting of a flying foe glorious? Achilles, throbbed not with irrepressible exultation thine iron-bound breast as thou chasedst the flying Hector round the walls of his deserted Troy? But canst thou, heaven-descended warrior that thou art, compare thy car to ours? The winged winds are our coursers—the ocean waves our chariot wheels—and unbounded space our unlimited course. Away! away!

At two o'clock we had risen the Jean Bart, so as to clear her broadside from the water's edge, as seen from our decks. The appetites of the doctor and purser had risen in proportion. They made a joint and disconsolate visit to the galley. All the fires were put out. The hens were cackling and the pigs grunting in dark security among the water-casks. Miserable men! there was no prospect of a dinner. They were obliged to do detestable penance upon cold fowl and ham, liquefied with nothing better than claret, burgundy, and the small solace derivable from the best brandy, mixed with filtrated water in most praiseworthy moderation.

At three o'clock we had the Jean Bart perfectly in sight, and we could, from the foreyard, observe well the motions of those on deck. The master was broiling his very red nose over his sextant in the forestaysail netting, when it was reported that the Frenchman was getting aft his two long brass bow chasers; and in half an hour after we had the report from the said brass bellowsers themselves, followed by the whistling of the shot, one wide of the ship, but the other smack through our foresail, and which must first have passed very near the noes of our respectable master.

Most of the officers, myself with the rest, were standing on the forecastle. Though not the first shot that I had seen fired in anger it certainly was the first that had ever hissed by me. This first salute is always a memorable epoch in the life of a soldier or sailor. By the rent the shot made in the foresail, it could not have passed, more than two yards directly over my head. I was taken by surprise. Every body knows that the rushing that the shot makes is excessively loud. As the illustrious stranger came on board with so much pomp and ceremony, I, from the impulse of pure courtesy, could not do otherwise than to bow to it; for which act of politeness the first lieutenant gave me a very considerably tingling box of the ear.

My angry looks, my clenched fists, and my threatening attitude, told him plainly that it was no want of spirit that made me duck to the shot. Just as I was passionately ex-

claiming, "Sir—I—I—" Captain Reud put his hand gently on my shoulder, and said, "Mr. Rattlin, what are you about? Mr. Farmer, that blow was not deserved. I, sir," said he, drawing himself up proudly, "ducked to the first shot. Many a fine fellow that has bobbed to the first has stood out gallantly to the last. What could you expect, Mr. Farmer from such a mere boy? And to strike him! Fie upon it! That blow, if the lad had weak nerves, though his spirit were as brave as Nelson's, and as noble as your namesake's, that foul blow might have cowed him for ever."

"They are getting ready to fire again," was now reported from the foreyard.

"Here, Rattlin," continued the captain, "take my glass, seat yourself upon the hammock-cloths, and tell me if you can make out what they are about."

Two flashes, smoke, and then the rushing of the shot, followed by the loud and ringing report of the brass guns, and of the reverberation of metal, was heard immediately beneath me. One of the shot had struck the fluke of the anchor in the forechains.

"There, Mr. Farmer," said the captain exultingly, "did you mark that? I knew it—I knew it, sir. He neither moved nor flinched—even the long tube that he held to his eye never quivered for an instant. Oh! Mr. Farmer, if you have the generous heart I give you credit for, never, never again strike a youngster for bobbing at the first, or even the fifth shot.

"I was wrong, sir," was the humble reply, "I am sorry that I should have given you occasion to make this *public* reprimand."

"No, Farmer," said the little creole very kindly. "I did not mean to reprimand, only to remonstrate. The severest reprimand was given you by Mr. Rattlin himself."

I could, at that moment, have hugged the little yellow-skinned captain, wicked as I knew him to be, and stood unmoved the fire of the grape of a twenty-gun battery.

But was I not really frightened at the whistling of the shot?

Yes; a little.

CHAPTER II.

It's well to have a long spoon when one sips soups with the devil—The captain's shot seldom misses—It is not always pleasant to have a clean shirt to one's back, very amply proved—And the best method of viewing an affair is to see it to your own advantage.

It is always a greater proof of courage to stand fire coolly than to fire. Captain Reud, I must suppose, wished to try the degree of intrepidity of his officers, by permitting the chase to give us several weighty objections against any more advance of familiarity on our parts. A quarter of a century ago there were some very strange notions prevalent in the navy, among which none was more common, than that the firing of the bow guns *materially* checked the speed of the vessel. The captain and the first lieutenant both held this opinion. Thus we continued to gain upon the corvette, and she, being emboldened by the impunity with which she canonaded us, fired the more rapidly and with greater precision, as our rent sails and ravelled running rigging began to testify.

I was rather impatient at this apparent apathy on our parts. Mr. Burn, the gunner, seemed to more than participate in my feelings. Our two bow guns were very imposing looking magnates. They would deliver a message at three miles distance, though it were no less than a missive of eighteen pounds avoirdupois; and we were now barely within half that distance. Mr. Burn was particularly excellent at two things, a long shot and the long bow. In all the ships that I have sailed, I never yet met with his equal at a cool, embellished, intrepid lie, or at the accuracy of his ball practice. Baron Munchausen would have found no mean rival in him at the former; and were duels fought with eighteen pounders, Lord Camelford would have been remarkably polite in the company of our master of projectiles.

I was upon the point of writing that Mr. Burn was *burning* with ardour. I see it written—it is something worse than a pun—therefore, *per omnes modos et casus*—heretical and

damnable—consequently I beg the reader to consign it to the oblivion with which we cover our bad actions, and read thus. The gunner was burning with impatience to show the captain what a valuable officer he commanded. The two guns had long been ready, and with the lanyard of the lock in his right hand, and the rim of his glazed hat in his left, he was continually saying, "Shall I give her a shot now, Captain Reud?"

The answer was as provokingly tautologous as a member of parliament's speech, who is, in aid of the whipper-in, speaking against time. "Wait a little, Mr. Burn."

"Well, Mr. Rattlin," said the fat doctor, blowing himself up to me, "so you have been knighted—on the deck of battle too—knight banneret of the order of the light bobs."

I was standing with the captain's glass to my eye, looking over the hammocks. In order to get near me he had been obliged to cling hold of the hammock-rails with both hands, so that his huge, round, red face, just peeped above the tarpaulin hammock-cloths, his chin resting upon them, no bad type of an angry sun showing his face above the rim of a black cloud, through a London November fog.

"Take care, doctor," I sang out, for I had seen the flashings of the enemy's guns.

"Light bobs," said the jeering doctor; when away flew the upper part of his hat, and down he dropped on the deck, on that part which nature seems to have purposely padded in order to make the fall of a man easy.

"No light bob, however," said I.

The doctor arose, rubbing with an assiduity that strongly reminded me of my old school-master, Mr. Root.

"To your station, doctor," said the captain harshly.

"Spoilt a good in hat in trying to make a bad joke;" and he shuffled himself below.

"Your gig, Captain Reud, cut all to shivers," said a petty officer.

This was the unkindest cut of all. As we were approaching Barbadoes, the captain had caused his very handsome gig to be hoisted in from over the stern, placed on the thwarts of the launch, and it had been in that position, only the day before, very elaborately painted. The irritated commander seized hold of the lanyard of one of the eighteen-pounders, exclaiming at the same time, "Mr. Burn, when you have got your sight fire!"

The two pieces of artillery simultaneously roared out their thunders, the smoke was driven aft immediately, and down toppled the three topmasts of the corvette. The falling of those masts was a beautiful sight. They did not rush down impetuously, but stooped themselves gradually and gracefully, with

all their clouds of canvas. A swan in mid air, with her-drooping wings broken by a shot, slowly descending, might give you some idea of the view. But after the descent of the multitudinous sails, the beauty was wholly destroyed. Where before there ~~carried~~ gallantly and triumphantly before the gale a noble ship, now nothing but a wreck appeared painfully to trail along laboriously its tattered and degraded ruins.

"What do you think of that shot, Mr. Farmer?" said the little captain, all exultation. "Pray, Mr. Rattlin, where did Mr. Burn's shot fall?"

"One of the shot struck the water about half a mile to port, sir," said I, for I was still at my post watching the proceedings.

"O Mr. Burn! Mr. Burn! what could you be about? It is really shameful to throw away his Majesty's shot in that manner. O Mr. Burn!" said the captain, more in pity than in anger.

Mr. Burn looked ridiculously foolish.

"O Mr. Burn," said I, "is this all you can show to justify your bragging?"

"If ever I fire a shot with the captain again," said the mortified gunner, "may I be rammed, crammed, and jammed in a mortar, and blown to atoms."

In the space of a quarter of an hour we were alongside of the Jean Bart. She mounted twenty-two guns, was crowded with a dirty crew, and after taking out most of them, and sending plenty of hands on board, in two hours more we had got up her spare topmasts.

Before dark, every thing appeared to be as if nothing had occurred, with the exception of the captain's gig, and the doctor's hat; and hauling our wind, in company with our prize, we made sail towards that quarter in which we had left our convoy.

I am going to mention a very trivial anecdote; but, as it is one of those curious coincidences, upon which are grounded so much superstition, I may be pardoned for narrating it. After the topmasts of the prize had fallen, every body had run below in the Jean Bart, with the exception of the captain, and two or three of the officers. The captain had taken the wheel, and still kept his vessel before the wind. When we were close upon her, we had hailed him several times to broach too, but either not hearing, or not understanding, there was no attention paid to our commands. The consequence was, a half dozen marines were ordered to fire into her. This had the desired effect. Of the four or five persons still on her decks, the captain was the only one struck. The ball passed

through his right arm. He then let go the wheel immediately, and the ship came, with her yards all square, and the wreck hanging about her, right into the wind.

When the French commander was having his wound dressed in the gun-room, he continued ~~sawing~~ *sawing* between his teeth, *cette maudite chemise*. The ball had passed clean through his arm, and not half an inch from the spot there were two scars, the marks that showed the passage of another ball, and on the shirt that he had on were the corresponding orifices.

This is the story of the shirt, which we had from his own mouth, and which he told the officers without much appearance of shame. The few French vessels then upon the seas were hunted about without intermission. They could rarely make any of the few friendly ports that were open to them; and, in the West Indies, every harbour was in the hands of their enemies. Consequently, linen of any sort was a great luxury. About two years before, the French captain had boarded and taken possession of an English merchant vessel, on board of which there was a body of a young gentleman, who had, the day before, died of a consumption. He was attended by an old black woman, indeed, her age was almost as much beyond belief as were her activity and strength. She had nursed this young gentleman's father, and his father, and felt a sort of canine devotion for every one bearing the family name. She had dressed out the body in the best linen shirt that she could find.

As the French captain had no idea of running into Antigua in order that the rites of sepulture should be paid to the departed plantation proprietor, he ordered the corpse, amidst the imprecations of the old negress, to have a shot attached to it, and to be thrown overboard. Not wishing to lose a good shirt, when shirts were so very scarce, he had it removed from the body, as he thought any old canvass was good enough to sink a corpse in. The horror of the negress at this profanation was intense, and she cursed him with all the bitterness of hate and revenge. Among other things, she wished that every time he put it on, it might bring disgrace and ruin upon his head, wither the strength of his right arm, and be stained with his best blood. Protected as this shirt was by the maledictions of the venerable of years, he had put it on but twice, at the interval of a year. Each time he had been wounded in the right arm, each time been ruined, and each time lost his ship.

Three times is generally considered fatal in similar affairs; but whether he experienced this fatality, I know not. I can only vouch for as much as I have related. Methinks a very

pretty nautical drama might be made out of this anecdote, entitled "The Fatal Shirt," or "The Curse of the Oboe Woman." If any manager is inclined to be liberal, my tale and my talents are entirely at his service.

At daylight, next morning, we found ourselves again with our convoy. Mr. Silva had recaptured the four vessels taken by the felucca. The Falcon hove in sight about mid-day. She had chased the felucca well to windward, when the immense large schooner had intruded herself as a third in the party, and she and the felucca, as well as I could understand, had united and gave the man-of-war brig a pretty considerable tarnation licking, as brother Jonathan hath it.

She certainly made a very shattered appearance, and had lost several men. However, in the official letter of the commander to Captain Reud, all this was satisfactorily explained. He had beaten them both, and they had struck; but owing to night coming on before he could take possession of them, they had most infamously escaped in the darkness. However, it did not much signify, as they were now, having struck, lawful prizes to any English vessel that could lay hold of them. I thought at the time that there was no doubt of *that*.

The next day we made the land. The low island of Barbadoes had the appearance of a highly-cultivated garden, and the green look so refreshing in a hot country, and so dear to me, as it reminded me of England.

CHAPTER III.

A naval dinner with its consequences—A naval argument with its consequences also—The way down the river paved at last, and the progress and the person of the unfortunate paviour finally arrested.

I HAVE no intention of repeating the oft repeated description of the West India islands. What is personal to me I shall relate: of course, incidentally I may be drawn into describe what has struck me as peculiar to these very favoured regions. We made but a short stay at "little England," as the Barbadians fondly call their verdant plat, and then ran

down through all the Virgin islands, leaving parts of our convoy at their various destinations. Our re-captured vessels, with a midshipman in each, also went to the ports to which they were bound. When we were abreast of the island of St. Domingo, our large convoy was reduced to about forty, all of which were consigned to the different ports of Jamaica. Our prize corvette was still in company, as we intended to take her to Port Royal.

We were all in excellent humour: luxuriating in the anticipation of our prize-money, and somewhat glorious in making our appearance in a manner so creditable to ourselves and profitable to the admiral on the station. All this occupied our minds so much, that we had hardly opportunity to think of persecution. But some characters can always find time for mischief, especially when mischief is but another name for pleasure. The activity which Mr. Silva had displayed in making the recaptures had gained him much respect with his messmates, and seemed to *pave the way* for a mutual good understanding.

What I am now going to relate could not, by any possibility, happen in the naval service of the present day. Let no one, therefore, suppose that in recording things that actually occurred, I am disseminating a libel against the profession, amongst the members of which I passed the happiest days of my life, in whom I have ever found the most chivalrous honour, the most unbounded generosity, and feelings the most remote from that all-pervading selfishness, which is the bane of the social circle, and the besetting sin of the times, at least in England. The little that is good, the very little upon which I pride myself, that my character gathered up, was gained amidst the toils, the dangers, and the constantly occurring privations of my ocean life: had the profession, however, been then improved, in many particulars, to what it now is, I make no doubt that it would have had a beneficial effect upon me. But no profession, drill the body and awe the mind as it may, can destroy identity of character. Discipline and coercion, will, and always do, modify it; but the more the submission of the lower grades of any social pact is complete, the controlling power must necessarily be the more haughty, the more wilful, and, too often, becomes the more insolent.

To show the navy as it was, and to point out some of its insouciances of office, instead of being a libel, is a compliment to the navy that now is. The affair that drove poor Silva out of the service can never recur; but it may not be amiss to relate it, as it is, in some measure, a justification for that curtailment of the mere wantonness of power in the commanding of-

ficer, that now, much to the annoyance of many worthy old tars, exists. It will also show to those who delight in tracing the philosophy of the mind, the rampant course of the passions, when an individual supposes himself above the consideration of the feelings of others, and released from every responsibility, even that of opinion; for opinion dared not make itself heard on board of a man of war then, and even now, and properly too, is wholesomely checked by the contemplation of danger.

The second lieutenant was invited to dinner with his two constant quizzers, the fat doctor and the acute purser, just as we had made the east end of Jamaica. I, it having been my forenoon watch, was consequently invited with the officer of it. We had lately been too much occupied to think of annoying each other; but those who unfortunately think that they have a prescriptive right to be disagreeable, and have a single talent that way, (the most common of talents,) seldom violate the advice of the Scripture, that warns us, not to hide that one talent in a napkin.

We found our sarcastic little skipper in the blindest and most urbane humour. He received me with a courtesy that almost made me feel affection for him. We found Mr. Farmer, the first lieutenant, with him, and had it not been for a sly twinkling of the eye of the captain, and very significant looks that now and then stole from Mr. Farmer, as he caught the expression of his commander's countenance, I should have thought that that day there was no "minching malicho," or any thing like mischief meant. There were but five of us sat down to table, yet the dinner was superb. We had, or rather the captain, supplied himself now with all the luxuries of a tropical climate, and those of the temperate were, though he could boast of little temperance, far from exhausted. We had turtle dressed different ways, though our flat friend made his first appearance in the guise of an appetising soup. We had stewed guana, a large sort of delicious lizard, that most amply repairs the offence done to the eye by his unsightly appearance, in conciliating in a wonderful manner all those minute yet important nerves that Providence has so bountifully and so numerous spread over the palate, the tongue, and the uvula. The very contemplation of this beneficent arrangement is enough to make a swearing boatswain pious.

We lacked neither fish, beef, nor mutton; though it is true, that the carcasses of the sheep, after having been dressed by the butcher and hung up under the half deck, gave us the consolation of knowing, that while there was a single one on board, we should never be in want of a poop lantern, so

delicately thin and transparent were the teguments that united the ribs. Indeed, when properly stretched, the body would have supplied the plate of a drum, and but little paring away of flesh would have fitted the legs and shoulders for drumsticks. Of fowls we had every variety, and the curries were excellent. Reud kept two experienced cooks; one was an Indian, well versed in all the mysteries of spices and provocatives, the other a Frenchman, who might have taken a high degree in Baron Rothschild's kitchen, which Hebrew kitchen is, we understand, the best appointed in the Christian world. The rivals sometimes knocked a pot or so over, with its luscious contents, in their contests for precedence, for cooks and kings have their failings in common; but, I must confess, that their Creole master always administered even-handed justice, by very scrupulously flogging them both.

Well, we will suppose the dinner done, and the West Indian desert on the table, and that, during the repast, the suavity of our host had been exemplary. He found some means of putting each of us on good terms with himself. At how little expense we can make each other happy!

The refreshing champagne had circulated two or three times, and the pine-apples had been scientifically cut by the sovereign hand of the skipper, who now, in his native regions, seemed to have taken to himself an increased portion of life. All this time, nothing personal or in the least offensive had been uttered. The claret, that had been cooling all day, by the means of evaporation in one of the quarter galleries, was produced, and the captain ordered a couple of bottles to be placed to each person with the exception of myself. Having thrown his legs upon another chair than that on which he was sitting, he commenced, "Now, gentlemen, let us enjoy ourselves. We have the means before us, and we should be very silly not to employ them. In a hot country, I don't like the trouble of passing the bottle."

"It is a great trouble to me, when it is a full one," said Dr. Thompson.

"Besides, the bustle and the exertion destroys the continuity of high-toned and intellectual conversation," said Captain Reud, with amiable gravity.

"It is coming now," thought I. Lieutenant Silva looked at first embarrassed, and then a little stern; it was evident, that that which the captain was pleased to designate as high-toned intellectual conversation was, despite his literary attainments, and the *pas* of superiority the publishing a book had given him, no longer to the author's taste.

"I have been thinking," said Captain Reud, placing the

fore finger of his left hand, with an air of great profundity, on the left side of his nose, "I have been thinking of the very curious fatality that has attached itself to Mr. Silva's excellent work."

"Under correction, Captain Reud," said Silva, "if you would permit this unfortunate work to sink into the oblivion that perhaps it too much merits, you would confer upon me, its undeserving author, an essential favour."

"By no means. I see no reason why I may not be proud of the book, and proud of the author (Mr. Silva starts;) providing the book be a good book; indeed, it is a great thing for me to say, that I have the honour to command an officer who has printed a book; the mere act evinces great *nerve*." (Mr. Silva winces.)

"And," said the wicked purser, "Captain Reud, you must be every way the gainer by this. The worse the book, the greater the courage. If Mr. Silva's wit——"

"You may test my wit by my book, Mr. ——, if you choose to read it," and the author looked scornfully, "and my courage, when we reach Port Royal," and the officer looked magnificently.

"No more of this," said the captain. "I was going to observe, that perhaps I am the only officer on the station, or even in the fleet, that has under my command a live author, with the real book that he has published. Now, Mr. Silva, we are all comfortable here—no offence is meant to you—only compliment and honour; will you permit us to have it read to us at the present meeting? we will be all attention. We will not deprive you of your wine—give the book to the youngster."

"If you will be so kind, Captain Reud, to promise for yourself and the other gentlemen, to raise no discussion upon any particular phrase that may arise."

The captain did promise. We shall presently see how that promise was kept. The book was sent for, and placed in my hands. Now, I fully opined, that, at least we should get past the second page. I was curiously mistaken.

"Here, steward," said the skipper, "place half-a-bottle of claret near Mr. Rattlin. When your throat is dry, youngster, you can whet your whistle; and when you come to any particular fine paragraph, you may wash it down with a glass of wine."

"If that's the case, sir, I think, with submission, I ought to have my two bottles before me also; but, if I follow your directions implicitly, Captain Reud, I may get drunk in the first chapter."

Mr. Silva thanked even a midshipman, with a look of real

gratitude, for this diversion in his favour. I had begun to like the man, and there might have been a secret sympathy between us, as one day it was to be my fate to write myself, author.

Having adjusted ourselves into the most comfortable attitudes that we could assume, I began, as Lord Ogleby hath it, with good emphasis and good discretion," to read the "Tour up and down the Rio de la Plate." Before I began, the Captain had sent for the master, and the honourable Mr. B——, so I had a very respectable audience.

I had no sooner finished the passage, "After we had paved our way down the river," than with one accord, and evidently by preconcert, every one, stretching forth his right hand, as do the witches in Macbeth, roared out, "stop!" It was too ludicrous. My eyes ran with tears, as I lay down the book, with outrageous laughter. Mr. Silva started to his feet, and was leaving the cabin, when he was ordered back by Captain Reud. An appearance of amicability was assumed, and to the old argument they went, baiting the poor author like a bear tied to a stake. Debating is a thirsty affair; the two bottles to each, and two more, quickly disappeared; the wine began to operate, and with the combatants, discretion was no longer the better part of valour.

Whilst words fell fast and furious, I observed something about eight feet long and one high, on the deck of the cabin, covered with the ensign. It looked much like a decorated seat. Mr. Silva would not admit the phrase to be improper, and consequently his associates would not permit the reading to proceed. During most of this time the captain was convulsed with laughter, and, whenever he saw the commotion at all lulling, he immediately, by some ill-timed remark, renewed it to its accustomed fury. At length, as the seamen say, they all had got a cloth in the wind—the captain two or three, and it was approaching the time for beating to quarters. The finale, therefore, as previously arranged, was acted. Captain Reud rose, and steadying himself on his legs, by placing one hand on the back of his chair, and the other on the shoulder of the gentleman that sat next to him, spoke thus:—"Gentlemen—I'm no scholar—that is—you comprehend fully—on deck, there—don't keep that d——d trampling—and put me out—where was I?"

"Please sir," said I, "you were saying you were no scholar."

"I wasn't—couldn't have said so. I had the best of educations—but all my masters were dull—d——d dull—so they couldn't teach a quick lad, like me, too quick for them—

couldn't overtake me with their d——d learning. I'm a straightforward man. I've common sense—com——common sense. Let us take a common sense view of this excruciation—ex—ex—I mean exquisite argument. Gentlemen, come here," and the captain between two supporters, and the rest of the company, with Mr. Silva, approached the mysterious-looking, elongated affair, that lay, like the corpse, covered with the Union Jack, of some lanky giant, who had run himself up into a consumption by a growth too rapid. The doctor and purser, who were doubtlessly in the secret, wore each a look of the most perplexing gravity, the captain one of triumphant mischief; the rest of us one of the most unfeigned wonder.

"If," spluttered out Captain Reud, see-sawing over the yet concealed thing. "If, Mr. Paviour, you can pave your way down a river——"

"My name sir, is Don Alphonso Ribidiero da Silva," said the annoyed lieutenant, with a dignified bow.

"Well, then, Don Alphonso Ribs-are-dear-o damned Silva, if you can pave your way down a river, let us see how you can pave it in a small way down this *hog-trough* full of water," plucking away, with the assistance of his confederates, the ensign that covered it.

"With fools' heads," roared out the exasperated, and I fear, not very sober, Portuguese.

Though I was close by, I could not fully comprehend the whole manœuvre. The captain was head and shoulders immersed in the filthy trough, which uncleaned was taken from the manger, that part of the main deck directly under the forecastle, and filled with salt water. The doctor and purser had taken a greater lurch, and fallen over it, sousing their white waistcoats, and well-arranged shirt frills, in the dirty mixture. The rest of us contrived to keep our legs. The ship was running before the wind, and rolling considerably, and the motion aided by the wine, and the act of plucking aside the flag *might* have precipitated the captain into his unenviable situation—he thought otherwise. No sooner was he placed upon his feet, and his mouth sufficiently clear from the salt water decoction of hog-wash—than he collared the poor victim of persecution, and spluttered out, "Mutiny—mu—mu—mutiny—sentry. Gentlemen, I call you all to witness, that Mr. Silva has laid violent hands upon me."

The "paviour of ways" was immediately put under arrest, and a marine, with a drawn bayonet, placed at his cabin door, and the captain had to repair damages, vowing the most im-

placable vengeance for having been shoved into his own hog-trough. *Did ever any body know any good come of hoaxing?*

CHAPTER IV.

The palisade banquet, and Major Flushfire's anthem to Yellow Jack—Who's afraid?—The sands of life's hour glass will run out rapidly, unless well soaked with wine.

WE will despatch the object of persecution in a few words. Lieutenant Silva was given the option of a court-martial, or of exchanging into a sloop of war. He chose the latter. The captain and his messmates saw him over the side, two days after we had anchored in Port Royal. The spiteful commander purposely contrived, when his effects were whipped into the boat, that one of the heavy, suspicious-looking cases should be swung against the gun and smashed. The result was exactly what we all expected. The water was strewn with copies, in boards of the "Tour up and down the Rio de la Plate." They must certainly have been light reading, as they floated about triumphantly. "I wonder whether they will pave their way up to Kingston," said the captain, with a sneer.

As the author would not suffer them to be picked up, they sank, one by one, and disappeared, like the remembrance of their creator in the minds of his companions. We heard, a few weeks after, that he had died of the yellow fever, and thus he, with his books, was consigned to oblivion, or is only rescued from it, if haply this work do not share his fate, by this short memento of him.

Yellow fever! malignant consumer of the brave! how shall I adequately apostrophise thee? I have looked in thy jaundiced face, whilst thy maw seemed insatiate. But once didst thou lay thy scorched hand upon my frame, but the sweet voice of woman startled thee from thy prey, and the flame of love was stronger than even thy desolating fire. But now is not the time to tell of this, but rather of the eagerness with which most of my companions sought to avoid thee.

Captain Reud had got, apparently, into his natural as well

as native climate. The hotter it was, like a cricket, he chirped the louder, and enjoyed it the more. Young and restless, he was the personification of mischievous humour and sly annoyance. The tales he told of the fever were ominous, appalling, fatal. *None could live who had not been seasoned, and none could outlive the seasoning. For myself, I might have been frightened, had I not been so constantly occupied in discussing pine-apples. But the climax was yet to be given to the fears of the fearful.

All the officers that could be spared from the ship were invited to dine with the mess of the 60th regiment, then doing duty at Kingston and Port Royal. That day, Captain Reud having been invited to dine with the admiral at the Penn, we were consequently deprived of his facetiousness. All the lieutenants and the wardroom officers, with most of the midshipmen, were of the party. The master took charge of the frigate. Suppose us all seated at the long table, chequered red and blue, with Major Flushfire, the officer in command of the garrison, at the top of the table, all scarlet and gold, and our own dear Doctor Thompson, all scarlet and blue, at the bottom. These two gentlemen were wonderfully alike. The major's scarlet was not confined to his regimentals: it covered his face. There was not a cool spot in that flame-coloured region; the yellow of his eyes was blood-shot, and his nose was richly Bardolphian. The expression of his features was thirst; but it was a jovial thirst withal—a thirst that burned to be supplied, encouraged, pampered. The very idea of water was repugnant to it. Hydrophobia was written upon the major's brow.

We have described our rubicund doctor before. He always looked warm, but since his entrance into the tropics, he had been more than hot, he had been always steaming. There was almost a perceptible mist about him. His visage possessed not the adust scorch of the major's: his was a moist heat; his cheeks were constantly parboiling in their own perspiration. He was a meet *croupier* for our host.

Ranged on each side of this noble pair were the long lines of very pale and anxious faces, (I really must except my own, for my face never looked anxious till I thought of marrying, or pale till I took to scribbling,) the possessors of which were experiencing a little the torment of Tantalus. The palisades, those graves of sand, turned into a rich compost by the ever-recurring burial, were directly under the windows, and the land-breeze came over them, chill and dank, in palpable currents, through the jalousies into the heated room; and, had one thrust his head into the moonlight and looked beneath, he

would have seen hundreds of the shell-clad vampires, upon their long and contorted legs, moving hideously round, and scrambling horribly over newly-made mounds, each of which contained the still fresh corpse of a warrior, or of the land, or of the ocean. In a small way, your land-crab is a most indefatigable resurrectionist. But there is retribution for their villany. They get eaten in their turn. Delicate feeding they are doubtlessly; and there can be no manner of question, but that, at that memorable dinner a double banquet was going on, upon a most excellent principle of reciprocity. The epicure crab was feeding upon the dish, man, below, whilst epicure man was feeding upon the dished-up crab above. True, the guests knew it not; I mean those who did not wear testaceous armour: the gentlemen in the coats of mail knew very well what they were about. It was, at the time of which I am speaking, a standing joke to make Johnny Newcome eat land-crab disguised in some savory dish. Thank God, that was more than a quarter of a century ago. We trust that the social qualities and the culinary refinements of the West Indians do not now march *a l'ecrivisse* and progress *a reculons*.

There we all sate, prudence coqueting with appetite, and the finest yellow curries contending with the direst thoughts of yellow fever. Ever and anon some amiable youth would dash off a bumper of claret with an air of desperate bravery, and then turn pale at the idea of his own temerity. The most cautious were Scotch assistant-surgeons, and pale young ensigns who played the flute. The midshipmen feasted and feared. The major and the doctor kept on the "even tenor of their way," that is, they ate and drank *a l'envie*.

We will now suppose the king's health drank, with the hearty and loyal, God bless him! from every lip—the navy drank, and thanks returned by the doctor, with his mouth full of vegetable marrow—the army drank, and thanks returned by the major, after clearing his throat with a bumper of brandy—and after "Rule Britannia" had ceased echoing along the now silent esplanade, that had been thundered forth with such energy by the black band, an awful pause ensues. Our first lieutenant of marines rises, and, like conscience, "with a still small voice," thus delivers himself of the anxiety with which his breast was labouring.

"Major Flushfire, may I claim the privilege of the similar colour of our cloth to entreat the favour of your attention? Ah! heh!—but this land-breeze—laden, perhaps, with the germs of the yellow—fever—mephitic—and all that—you understand me, Dr. Thompson?"

"As much as you do yourself."

"Thank you—men of superior education—sympathy—and all that—you understand me fully, major. Now this night, breeze coming through that half-open *jalousie*—*miasmata*—and all that. Dr. Armstrong, Dr. Thompson—medical pill—"pillars of the state"—you'll pardon the classical allusion—"

"I won't," growled out the doctor.

"Ah—so like you—so modest—but don't you think the draught is a little dangerous?"

"Do you mean the doctor's, or this?" said the inattentive and thirsty major, fetching a deep breath, as he put down the huge glass tumbler of sangaree.

"O dear no!—I mean the night draught *through* the window."

"The best way to dispose of it," said the purser, nodding at the melting Galen.

"No," replied Major Flushfire courteously, "there's no danger in it at all—I like it."

"Bless me, major," said the marine, "why it comes all in *gusts*."

"Like it all the better," rejoined the major, with his head again half buried in the sangaree glass.

"*De gustibus, non est disputandum*," observed Thompson.

"Very true," said the marine officer, looking sapiently. "That remark of yours about the *winds* is apposite. We ought to *dispute* their entrance, as you said in Latin. But is it quite fair, my dear doctor, for you and me to converse in Latin? We may be taking an undue advantage of the rest of the company."

"Greek! Greek!" said the purser.

"Aye, certainly—it was Greek to Mr. Smallcoates," muttered Thompson.

"To be sure it was," said the innocent marine. "Major Flushfire," continued he, once more on his legs, "may I again entreat the honour of your attention. Dr. Thompson has just proved, by a quotation from a Greek author, Virgil or Paracelsus, I am not certain which, that the entrance of the night air into a hot room is highly injurious, and in—in—and all that. You understand me perfectly—would it be asking too much to have all the windows closed?"

"Ovens and furnaces!" cried out the chairman, starting up. "Look at me and worthy Doctor Thompson. Are we persons to enjoy a repetition of the Blackhole of Calcutta? The sangaree, Quasha—suffocation! The thought chokes me!" and he recommenced his devotions to the sangaree.

"It melts me," responded the doctor, swabbing his face with the napkin.

"Are you afraid of taking cold?" said the purser to Mr. Smallcoates.

"Taking cold—let the gentleman take his wine," said the major.

"I must confess I am not so much afraid of cold as of fever. I believe, major, you have been three years in this very singularly hot and cold climate. Now, my dear sir, may I tax your experience to tell us which is the better method of living? Some say temperance, carried out even to abstemiousness, is the safer; others, that the fever is best repelled by devil's punch, burnt brandy, and high living. Indeed, I may say that I speak at the request of my messmates. Do, major, give us your opinion."

"I think," said the man of thirst, "the medical gentlemen should be applied to in preference to an old soldier like myself. They have great practice in disposing of fever cases."

"But if we must die either of diet or the doctor, I am for knowing," said the purser, "not what doctor but what sort of diet is most dilatory in its despatch."

"Well, I will not answer the question, but state the facts. My messmates can vouch for the truth of them. Five years ago, and not three, I came out with a battalion of this regiment. We mustered twenty-five officers in all. We asked ourselves the very same question you have just asked of me. We split into two parties nearly even in number. Twelve of us took to water, temperance, and all manner of preservatives; the other thirteen of us led a harum-scarum life, ate whenever we were hungry, and when we were not hungry, drank whenever we were thirsty, and when we were not thirsty, and, to create a thirst, we qualified our claret with brandy; and generally forgot the water, or substituted Madeira for it, in making our punch. This portion of our body, like Jack Falstaff, was given to sleeping on bulkheads on moonlight nights, shooting in the midday sun, riding races, and sometimes, hem! assisting—a—a—at drinking matches."

Here the worthy soldier made a pause, appeared more thirsty than ever, scolded Quasha for not brandying his sangaree, and swigging it with the air of Alexander, when he proceeded to drain the cup that was fatal, he looked round with conscious superiority. The pale ensign looked more pale—the sentimental lieutenants more sentimental—many thrust their wine and their punch from before them, and there was a sudden competition for the water-jug. The marine carried a stronger

expression than anxiety upon his features—it was consternation—and thus hesitatingly delivered himself:

"And—so—so—sir—the bon vivants—deluded—poor deluded gentlemen! all perished—but—pardon me—delicate dilemma—but *yourself*, my good major."

"Exactly, Mr. Smallcoates; and within the eighteen months."

There was a perceptible shudder through the company, military as well as naval. The pure element became in more demand than ever, and those who did not actually push away their claret, watered it. The imperturbable major brandied his sangaree more potently.

"But," said Mr. Smallcoates, brightening up, "the temperate gentlemen all escaped the contagion—*undoubtedly!*"

"I beg your pardon—they *all died within the year*. I alone remain of all the officers to tell the tale. The year eight was dreadful. Poor fellows!" The good major's voice faltered, and he bent over his sangaree much longer than was necessary to enjoy the draught.

Blank horror passed her fearful glance from guest to guest. Even the rubicund doctor's mouth was twitched awry. I did not quite like it myself.

"But I'm alive," said the major, rallying up from his bitter recollections, "and the brandy is just as invigorating, and the wine just as refreshing, as ever."

"The major is alive," said the marine officer, very sapiently. "Is that brandy before you, Mr. Farmer? I'll trouble for it—I really feel this claret very cold upon my stomach. "Yes," he repeated, after taking down a tumbler full of half spirits, half wine, "the major *is* alive—and—so am I."

"The major is alive," went round the table; "let us drink his health in bumpers."

The major returned thanks, and volunteered a song. I begged it, and the reader may sing it as he pleases, though I shall please myself by recording how the major was pleased to have it sung.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you will do me the favour to fill a bumper of lemonade, and when I cry chorus, chorus me standing, with the glasses in your hands; and at the end of each chorus you will be pleased to remember, that the glass is to be drained. No heel-taps after, and no daylight before. Now for it, my lads," and with a voice that must have startled the land crabs from their avocations, he roared out—

“ Yellow Jack! Yellow Jack! hie thee back! hie thee back!
 To thy damp, drear abode in the jungle;
 I'll be sober and staid,
 And drink LEMONADE,
 Try and catch me—you'll make a sad bungle,
 Yellow Jack!

“ But he came the queer thief, and he seiz'd my right hand,
 And I writh'd and I struggled, yet could not withstand
 His hot griping grasp, though I drank lemonade,—
 He grinn'd and he clutch'd me, though sober and staid.

CHORUS, (*with increasing loudness.*)

“ Yellow Jack! Yellow Jack! hie thee back! hie thee back!
 To thy damp, drear abode in the jungle;
 We'll be sober and staid,
 And we'll drink lemonade,
 Try and catch us—you'll make a sad bungle,
 Yellow Jack! (*tremendously.*)

“ Bumpers of sangaree,” roared the major, and sang,

“ Yellow Jack! Yellow Jack! hie thee back! hie thee back!
 To thy pestilent swamp quickly hie thee,
 For I'll drink SANGAREE,
 Whilst my heart's full of glee,
 In thy death-doing might I'll defy thee,
 Yellow Jack!

“ But the fiend persever'd and got hold of my side,
 How I burn'd, and I froze, and all vainly I tried
 To get rid of his grasp—though I drank sangaree,
 No longer my bosom exulted with glee.

CHORUS, (*still more loudly.*)

“ Yellow Jack! Yellow Jack! hie thee back! hie thee back!
 To thy pestilent swamp quickly hie thee,
 For we'll drink sangaree,
 Whilst our hearts throb with glee,
 In thy death-doing might we defy thee,
 Yellow Jack!

After the sangaree, strong and highly spiced, had been
 quaffed, the excitement grew wilder, and the leader of our
 revels exclaimed at the top of his voice, “ Wine, gentlemen,
 wine—brimmers,” and thus continued—

“ Yellow Jack ! Yellow Jack ! hie thee back ! hie thee back !
 Begone to thy father, old Sootie,
 Pure wine now I'll drink,
 So Jack, I should think,
 Of me thou wilt never make booty,
 Yellow Jack !

“ But a third time he came, and seized hold of my head,
 'Twas in vain that the doctor both blister'd and bled,
 My hand, and my side, and my heart too, I think,
 Would soon have been lost, though pure wine I might drink.

CHORUS.

“ Yellow Jack ! Yellow Jack ! hie thee back ! hie thee back !
 Begone to thy father, old Sootie,
 Pure wine now we'll drink,
 So Jack, we should think,
 Of us thou wilt never make booty,
 Yellow Jack !

“ Brandy,” shouted the major. “ Brandy—he's a craven who shirks the call.” There was no one there craven but myself. My youth excused my apostasy from the night's orgies. The major resumed, his red face intensely hot and arid.

“ Yellow Jack ! Yellow Jack ! hie thee back ! hie thee back !
 To the helldam, Corruption, thy mother,
 For with BRANDY I'll save
 My heart, and thus brave
 Thee and fell Death, thine own brother,
 Yellow Jack !

“ To brandy I took, and then Jack took his leave,
 Brandy-punch and neat brandy drink morn, noon, and eve,
 At night drink, then sleep, and be sure, my brave boys,
 Nought will quell Yellow Jack, but neat brandy and noise.

THE CHORUS, (*most uproariously.*)

“ Yellow Jack ! Yellow Jack ! hie thee back ! hie thee back !
 To the helldam, Corruption, thy mother,
 For the brandy we'll save
 Our hearts, and thus brave
 Thee, and fell Death, thine own brother,
 Yellow Jack !”

At last "Yellow Jack" was thundered out loud enough to awake his victims from the palisades. The company were just then fit for any thing, but certainly most fit for mischief. Our first lieutenant intimated to me that the jolly-boat was waiting, to take the junior officers on board—considerate man—so I took the hint, marvelling much upon the scene that I had just witnessed.

Whether or not there was any mystic virtue in the exorcisory cantation of the previous night, I cannot determine; but it is certain, that next morning, though headaches abounded among our officers, indications of the yellow fever there were none.

CHAPTER V.

Insubordination followed by elevation—A midshipman triced up in mid-air, and affording a practical lesson on oscillation—All truck and no barter.

BUT as it is not my intention to write a diary of my life, which was like all other midshipmen's lives in the West Indies, I shall pass over some months, during which we remained tolerably healthy, took many prizes, cut out some privateers, and spent money so rapidly gained, in a manner still more rapid.

Of my own messmates I remember but little. They were generally shockingly ignorant young men, who had left school too early, to whom books were an aversion, and all knowledge save that merely nautical, a derision. I had to go more often to fusty-cuffs with these youths, in defending my three-deckers—words of Latin and Greek derivation—than on any other occasion. I remember well that the word "idiosyncrasy" got me two black eyes, and my opponent, as "pretty a luxation" of the shoulder by being tumbled down the main hatchway at the close of the combat, as any man of moderate expectations might desire. I was really obliged to mind my parts of speech. I know, that instead of using the obnoxious word idiosyncrasy, I should have said, that Mr. So-and-so had "a list to port in his ideas." I confess my error—my sin against elegance was great; but it must be said in extenuation, that then I was young and foolish.

However, I really liked my mode of life. Notwithstanding my occasional squabbles with my messmates upon my inadvertently launching a first-rate, I can safely say, I was beloved by every body—nor is the term too strong. The captain liked me because I was always well dressed, of an engaging appearance, and a very handsome appendage to his gig, and aid-de-camp in his visits on shore; perhaps from some better motives—though, certainly, amidst all his kindness to me, he once treated me most tyrannously.

The doctor and the purser liked me, because I could converse with them rationally upon matters not altogether nautical. The master almost adored me, because having a good natural talent for drawing, I made him plans of the hold, and the stowage of his tiers of water-casks, and sketches of headlands in his private log-book, to all which he was condescending enough to put his own name. The other superior officers thought me a very good sort of fellow, and my messmates liked me, because I was always happy and cheerful and lent them money.

The crew, to a man, would have done any thing for me, because—it was very foolish certainly—I used, for some months to cry heartily when any of them were tied up. And afterwards, when I got rid of this weakness, I always begged as many of them off from the infliction of the lash, of Mr. Farmer, the first lieutenant, as I could. With him I could take the liberty, if I found him in a good humour; though I dared not with the captain; for, though the latter had some attachment for me, it was a dreadfully wayward and capricious feeling.

The longer I sailed with him the more occasion I had to dread, if not to hate him. The poor man had no resources—it is not therefore surprising, that he began to have recourse to habitual ebriety. Then, under the influence of his wine, he would be gay, mischievous, tyrannical, and even cruel, according to the mood of the moment. Yet, at the worst, though his feet faltered, when in his cups, his tongue never did. He even grew eloquent under the vinous influence. It sharpened his cunning, and wonderfully increased his aptitude for mischief. It was a grievous calamity to all on board the ship, that we could not give his mind healthful occupation. I said that he was fond of me, but I began to dread his affection, and to feel myself as being compelled to submit to the playful caresses of a tiger. As yet, not only had we not had the slightest difference, but he had often humoured me to the detriment of the service, and in defiance of the just discipline Mr. Farmer

wished to maintain. If I presumed upon this, who shall blame such conduct in a mere boy? And then, Captain Reud was necessary to me. I found that I could not avail myself of my too ample allowance until he had endorsed my bills of exchange.

However, the concealed fang of the paw that had so often played with and patted me into vanity, was to wound me at length. It came upon me terribly, and entered deeply into my bosom.

I was learning to play chess of the purser—the game had already become a passion with me. It was also my turn to dine in the ward-room, and, consequently, I was invited. The anticipated game at chess enhanced the value of the invitation. That same forenoon, the captain and I had been very sociable. He gracious, and I facetious—as I could. I had been giving him a history of my various ushers, and he had been pleased to be wonderfully amused. I was down in the midshipmen's berth: a full hour after I had received the ward-room invitation, the captain's steward shoved his unlucky head within the door, and croaked out, "Captain Reud's compliments to Mr. Rattlin, and desires his company to dinner to-day."

I answered carelessly, rather flippantly, perhaps, "Tell the captain I'm going to dine in the ward-room." I meant no disrespect, for I felt none. Perhaps the fellow who took back my answer worded it maliciously, I had totally forgotten, as soon as I had uttered my excusal, whether I had or had not used the word "compliments," or "respects,"—perhaps, thoughtlessly, neither one nor the other.

I dined in the ward-room, enjoyed my chess, and, good easy youth, with all my blushing honours thick upon me, of having given mate with only trifling odds in my favour, the drum beat to evening quarters. I was stationed to the four aftermost caronades on the quarterdeck. I had run up in a hurry, and at that period, straps to keep down the trowsers not having been invented, my white jeans were riddled a good deal up my leg. I passed the captain, touched my hat, and began to muster my men. Unconscious of any offence, I stole a look or two at my commander, but met with no good-humoured glance in return. He had screwed up his little yellow physiognomy into the shape of an ill-conditioned and battered face on a brass knocker. He had his usual afternoon wine-flush upon him; but a feeling of vindictiveness had placed his feelings of incipient intoxication under complete mastery.

"So you dined in the ward-room, Mr. Rattlin?"

"Yes, sir," my hat reverently touched, not liking the looks of my interrogator.

"And you did not even condescend to return the compliments I sent you, with my misplaced invitation to dinner."

"Don't recollect, sir."

"Mr. Rattlin, in consideration of your ignorance, I can forgive a personal affront—damme—but by the living G—d, cannot overlook disrespect to the service. You young misbegotten scoundrel, what do you mean by coming to quarters undressed? Look at your trowsers, sir."

"The captain is in a passion, certainly," thought I, as I quietly stooped to pull the offending garment down to my shoes.

"Mr. Farmer, Mr. Farmer, do you see the young black-guard?" said the commander. "Confound me, he is making a dressing-room of my quarter-deck—and at quarters too—which is the same as parade. Hither, sirrah; ho—ho—my young gentleman, Young gentleman, truly—a conceited little bastard!"

The word burnt deeply into my young heart, and caused a shock upon my brain, as if an explosion of gunpowder had taken place within my skull, but it passed instantaneously, and left behind it an unnatural calm.

"Pray, sir," said I, walking up to him deliberately and resolutely, "how do *you* know that I am a bastard?"

"Do you hear the impudent scoundrel? Pray, sir, who is your father?"

"O that I knew!" said I bursting into tears. "I bless God that it is not you."

"To the mast-head, to the mast-head! Where's the boatswain? start him up, start him up."

The boatswain could not make his way aft till I was some rattlings up the main rigging, and thus his intentional and kind dilatoriness saved me from the indignity of a blow. Twice I gazed upon the clear blue, and transparent water, and temptation was strong upon me, for it seemed to woo me to rest; but when I looked in-board, and contemplated the diminutive, shrivelled, jaundiced figure beneath me, I said to myself, "Not for such a thing as that."

Before I had got to the main-top, I thought, "This morning he loved me!—poor human nature!"—and when I had got to the topmast-cross-trees, I had actually forgiven him. It has been my failing through life, as Shakspeare expresses it "to have always lacked gall." God knows how much I have forgiven, merely because I have found it impossible to hate.

But I was to be tried still more. I had settled myself comfortably on the cross-trees, making excuses for the captain, and condemning my own want of caution, and anticipating a reconciliatory breakfast with my persecutor, when his shrill voice came discordantly upon my ears.

"Mast-head there!"

"Sir."

"Up higher, sir—up higher."

I hesitated—the order was repeated with horrid threats and imprecations. There were no rattlings to the top-gallant rigging. It had been tremendously hot all day, and the tar had been sweated from the shrouds; and I was very loth to spoil my beautiful white jean trowsers by swarming up them. However, as I perceived that he had worked himself into a perfect fury up I went, and to the top-gallant mast-head, embracing the royal pole with one arm, and standing on the bights of the rigging. My nether apparel, in performing this feat, appeared as if it had been employed in wiping up a bucket of spilled tar.

But I was not long to remain unmolested in my stance on the high and giddy mast. My astonishment and dismay were unbounded at hearing Captain Reud still vociferate, "Up higher, sir."

The royal pole stood naked, with nothing attached to it but the royal and the signal-halyards, the latter running through the truck. My lady readers must understand that the truck is that round thing at the top of all the masts, that looks so like a button. I could not have got up the well greased pole if I had attempted it. A practised seaman could, certainly, and, indeed one of those worthies who climb for legs of mutton at a fair, might have succeeded to mount a few inches.

"What!" said I, half aloud, "does the tyrant mean? He knows that this thing I cannot do: and he also knows that if I attempt it, it is probable I shall lose my hold of this slippery stick, and be rolled off into the sea. If he wishes to murder me, he shall do so more directly. Forgive him—never. I'll brave him first, and revenge myself after."

Again that deadly calm came over me, which makes soft dispositions so desperate, and to which light-haired persons are so peculiarly subject. In these temperaments, when the paleness becomes fixed and unnatural, beware of them in their moods. They concentrate the vindictiveness of a life in a few moments, and, though the paroxysm is usually short, it is too often fatal to themselves and to their victims. I coolly

commenced descending the rigging, whilst the blackest thoughts crowded in distinct and blood-stained array upon my brain. I bethought me from whence I could the most readily pluck a weapon, but the idea was but instantaneous, and I dismissed it with a mighty effort. At length, I reached the deck, whilst the infuriated captain stood mute with surprise at my outrageously insubordinate conduct. The men were still at their quarters and partook of their commander's astonishment, but, I am convinced, of no other feeling.

When I found myself on the deck I walked up to captain Reud, and between my clenched teeth I said to him slowly and deliberately, "Tyrant, I scorn you. I come premeditatedly to commit an act of mutiny: I give myself up as a prisoner: I desire to be tried by a court-martial. I will undergo anything to escape from you; and I don't think that, with all your malice, you will be able to hang me. I consider myself under an arrest." Then turning upon my heel I prepared to go down the quarter-deck hatchway.

Captain Reud heard me to the end in silence; he even permitted me to go down half the ladder unmolested, when rousing himself from his utter astonishment, he jumped forward and spurning me with his foot violently on my back, dashed me on the main deck. I was considerably bruised, and, before I got to the midshipman's berth, two marines seized me and dragged me again to the quarter-deck. Once more I stood before my angry persecutor, looking hate and defiance.

"To the mast-head, sir, immediately."

"I will not. I consider myself a prisoner."

"You refuse to go?"

"I do."

"Quarter masters, the signal halyards. Sling Mr. Rattlin." Mr. Rattlin was slung. "Now run the mutinous rascal up to the truck."

In a moment I was attached to a thin white line, waving to and fro in mid air, and soon triced up to the very top of the royal pole, and jammed hard to the truck. Is this believed? Perhaps not; yet no statement was ever more true. At the time when the atrocity was perpetrating not an officer interfered. My sufferings were intense. The sun was still hot, my hat had fallen off in my involuntary ascent, and, as the ship was running before the wind under her topsails, the motion at that high point of elevation was tremendous. I felt horribly sea-sick. The ligature across my chest became every

moment more oppressive to my lungs, and more excruciating in torture: my breathing at each respiration more difficult, and, before I had suffered ten minutes, I had fainted. So soon as the captain had seen me run up he went below, leaving strict orders that I should not be lowered down.

Directly that the captain was in his cabin, the first lieutenant, the doctor, purser, and the officers of the watch, held a hurried consultation on my situation. But the good-natured doctor did not stop for the result, but immediately went below, and told Reud if I remained where I was I should die. Those who knew the navy at that time will anticipate the answer—no others can—"Let him die and be damned!" The good doctor came on deck desponding. Mr. Farmer then hailed me once, and again and again. Of course he received no answer—I heard him, but, at that moment, my senses were fast leaving me. The sea with its vast horizon, appearing so illimitable from the great height where I was swaying, rocked, to my failing sight, awfully to and fro: the heavens partook of the dizzying motion. I only, of all the creation, seemed standing still: I was sick unto death; and as far as sensation was concerned, then and there I died.

Upon receiving no reply, Mr. Farmer sent one of the topmen up to look at me. No sooner had he reached the topgallant rigging than he reported me dead. A cry of horror escaped from all on deck. The captain rushed up: he needed no report. He was frantic with grief: he wept like a child, and assisted with his own hands to lower me down; they were his arms that received, himself that bore me to his cabin. Like a wilful boy who had slain his pet lamb, or a passionate girl her dove, he mourned over me. It was a long time before my respiratory organs could be brought into play. My recovery was slow, and it was some time before I could arrange my ideas. A cot was slung for me in the cabin, and bewildered and exhausted I fell into a deep sleep.

I awoke a little after midnight perfectly composed, and suffering only from the wale that the cord had made across my chest. Before a table, and his countenance lighted by a single lantern, sat the captain. His features expressed a depth of grief and a remorse that were genuine. He sat motionless, with his eyes fixed upon my cot; my face he could not see, owing to the depth of the shadow in which I lay. I moved:—he advanced to my cot with the gentleness of a woman, and softly uttered,

"Ralph, my dear boy, do you sleep?"

The tones of his voice fell soothingly upon my ear like the music of a mother's prayer.

"No, Captain Reud, but I am very thirsty."

In an instant he was at my side with some weak wine and water. I took it from the hand of him whom, but a few hours before, in my animosity I could have slain.

"Ralph," said he, as he received back the tumbler, "Ralph, are we friends?"

"Oh! Captain Reud, how could you treat a poor lad thus, who respected, who loved you so much?"

"I was mad—do you forgive me, Ralph?" and he took my not unwilling hand.

"To be sure, to be sure—but do me one little favour in return."

"Any thing, any thing, Ralph—I'll never mast-head you again."

"Oh, I was not thinking of that; I ought not to have put you in a passion. Punish me—mast-head me—do any thing, Captain Reud, but call me not bastard."

He made no reply; he pressed my hand fervently; he put it to his lips and kissed it—on my soul he did—then after a pause, gently murmured "good night," and, as he passed into the after-cabin to his bed, I distinctly heard him exclaim, "God forgive me—how I have wronged that boy!"

The next day we were better friends than ever, and for the three years that we remained together, not a reproachful word or an angry look ever passed between us.

I must be permitted to make three observations upon this, to me, memorable transaction. The first is, that at that time, I had not the power of retention of those natural feelings of anger which all should carry with them as a preservation against, or a punishment for, injury and insult. I know that most of my male and many of my female readers will think my conduct throughout pusillanimous or abject. My mother's milk, as it were, still flowed in my veins, and, with that, no ill blood could amalgamate. All I can say is, that now, I am either so much better or so much worse—that I should have adopted towards Captain Reud a much more decided course of proceedings.

My second remark is, that this captain had really a good heart, but was one of the most striking instances that I ever knew of the demoralizing effects of a misdirected education, and the danger of granting great powers to early years and great ignorance. With good innate feelings, no man ever possessed moral perceptions more clouded.

And lastly, that this statement is not to be construed into a libel on the naval service, or looked upon, in the least, as an exaggerated account. As to libel, the gentlemanly deportment, the parental care of their crews, and the strict justice of thousands of captains, cannot in the least be deteriorated by a single act of tyranny by a solitary member of their gallant body; and, as to exaggeration, let it be remembered that in the very same year, and on the very same station that my tricing up to the truck occurred, another post-captain tarred and feathered one of his young gentlemen, and kept him in that state, a plumed biped, for more than six weeks in his hen-coop. This last fact obtained much notoriety from the aggrieved party leaving the service and recovering heavy damages from his torturer in a court of civil law. My treatment never was known beyond our own frigate.

CHAPTER VI.

Ralph entereth into the regions of romance and privateering—Carried thither by a French pilot, malgré lui—An inopportune visit.

SHORTLY after the illegal suspension of the Habeas Corpus, that I recorded in the last chapter, the portion of the navy stationed in the West Indies became actively employed in the conquest of those islands still in the possession of the French. Some fell almost without a struggle, others, at much expense of life both of the military and naval forces. As every one who could find a publisher, has written a book on all these events, from the capture of the little spot Deseada to the sub-

duing the magnificent Island of Gaudaloupe, and the glorious old stone-built city of Domingo, I may well be excused detailing the operations.

Among other bellicose incidents that varied the dull monotony of my life, was the beating off a frigate equal in force to our own; though I believe that we were a little obliged to her for taking leave of us in a manner so abrupt, though we could not certainly complain of the want, on her part, of any attention for the short and busy hour that she stayed with us, for she assisted us to shift all our topmasts, and, as before she met us, we had nothing but old sails to display, she considerably decorated us with a profusion of ribands gaily fluttering about our lower masts and the topmasts that were still standing gracefully hanging over our sides.

We were too polite and well bred not to make some return for all these *petit soins*. As, between the tropics, the weather is generally very warm, we evinced a most laudable anxiety that she should be properly ventilated, so we assiduously began drilling holes through and through her hull; and, I assure the reader, that we did it in a surpassingly workmanlike manner. But, in the midst of this spirited exchange of courtesies, our Gallic friend remembered that he had, or might have, another *engagement*, so he took his leave; and, as he had given us so many reasons to prevent our insisting to attend upon him, we parted, *en pleine mer*, leaving us excessively annoyed that we were prevented from accompanying him any farther.

In Captain Rend's despatches he stated, and stated truly, that we beat him off. Why he went, I could not understand; for, excepting in the shattered state of his hull, and more particularly in a sad confusion of his quarter gallery, with his two aftermost main-deck ports, he sailed off with his colours flying, and every sail drawing, even to his royals. But the French used to have their own method of managing these little matters.

But let us rapidly pass over these follies, and hasten to something more exquisitely foolish. And yet I cannot. I have to clear away many dull weeds, and tread down many noxious nettles, before I can reach the one fresh and thornless rose, that bloomed for a short space upon my heart, and the fragrance of which so intoxicated my senses, that, for a time, I was under the blessed delusion of believing myself happy.

I had now been two years and a half in the West Indies, and I was fast approaching my nineteenth year. At this period, we had taken several English West Indiamen. There

was a fearful, a soul-harrowing, yet a tender tale, connected with one of these recaptures. It should be told, for the honour of that sex, whom to honour is man's greatest glory; but not now—nor in this life. Yet it ought to be narrated; and I here record my vow, that if I live, and I have the heart to go through it, and my dear ——— will resolve me that one incubus of a doubt that has hung heavily on my heart for these five-and-twenty years, that that tale shall be told, that man may admire, and wonder, and weep.

In one of these retaken merchant vessels there was found, as the French prize-master, and now of course our prisoner, a mercurial little fellow of the name of Messurier. He was very proud of the glory of his nation, and still prouder of his own. As France possessed many historians, and Monsieur Adolphe Sigismund Messurier but one, and that one himself, of course, he had the duty of, at least, three hundred scavans thrown upon his own shoulders: he performed it nobly, and with an infinite relish. Now, when a person who is given to much talking is also given to much drinking, it generally happens, injurious as is the vice of the grog bottle, that the vice of the voluble tongue is still worse. When in his cups, he told us of the scores that he had slain, counting them off by threes and fives upon his fingers, his thumbs indicating captains, his forefingers first lieutenants, and so on with the various grades in our service, until the *aspirants*, or middies, were merely honoured by his little finger as their representative; we only laughed, and asked him, if he had been so destructive to the officers, how many men had fallen by the puissance of his arm. It seemed that these latter were too numerous and too ignoble to be counted; for that question was always answered with a *bah!* and a rapidly passing over the extended palm of his left hand with his open right one.

But when, one evening, he mentioned that he could pilot a frigate into the inland waters from whence swarmed the crowd of schooner-privateers that infested the islands, and by their swift sailing to windward, eluded our fastest ships, we laughed still, and I did something more; I reported this boast to Captain Reud.

"Then," exclaimed my valorous little creole, "by all the virtues of a long eighteen, he shall take in his Majesty's frigate Eos."

Whenever he protested by a long eighteen, in the efficacy of whose powers he had the most implicit reliance, we might look upon the matter as performed.

The next morning, whilst Monsieur Messurier was solacing

his aching head with his hands, oblivious of the events of the preceding evening, he was feelingly reminded of his consummate skill in pilotage. He then became most unnaturally modest, and denied all pretensions to the honour. Now Captain Reud had no idea that even an enemy should wrap up his talent in a napkin, so he merely said to him, "You must take my ship in." When the captain had made up his mind, the deed generally trod upon the heels of the resolve. Poor man! he was always in want of something to do, and thus he was too happy to do anything that offered excitement. Monsieur Messurier was in despair; he prayed and swore alternately, talked about sacrificing his life for the good of his country, and told us, in a manner that convinced us that he wished us to believe the absurdity, that honour was the breath of his nostrils. However, the captain was fully intent upon giving him the glorious opportunity of exclaiming with effect, *Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori*.

Not knowing the strength of the stronghold that it was our intention to surprise, Captain Reud cruised about for a few days, until he had collected another frigate, a sloop of war, and two eighteen gun-brigs, the commanders of all being, of course, his juniors. Having made all necessary arrangements, one beautiful morning we found ourselves close off the iron-bound and rocky shores of the east-end of St. Domingo. We ran along shore for a couple of hours, when we perceived an opening in the lofty piles of granite, that frowned over the blue ocean. This was the entrance into the harbour where lay our destined prizes.

Captain Reud, taking the responsibility into his own hands, had determined to lead in. The charts were minutely examined, but they gave us no hope. The soundings laid down were so shallow, and the paths so intricate, that, by them, we wondered much, how even a privateer-schooner could make the passage in safety. To a frigate drawing three-and-twenty feet of water, the attempt seemed only a precursor to destruction.

We hove-to; the captains of the other vessels were signalled on board, and, with them and our first lieutenant and master, a sort of council of war was held; and, as every one present gave his voice against the attempt, our skipper's mind was made up directly. He resolved to go in, trusting to the chapter of accidents, to a gracious Providence, and Monsieur Messurier upon the fore-yard, with a seaman with a pistol at each ear, to scatter his brains the moment the ship struck. The weather was brilliant, the wind moderate and fair, when

we bore up for the mouth of the passage. It was something at once ludicrous and painful to witness the agony of our pilot in spite of himself. Between oaths, protestations, and tremors, the perspiration of terror flowing down his face, mingled with his tears, he coned the ship with a precision that proved, at least in that matter, that he was no vain boaster.

But we had scarcely advanced a few hundred yards within the gorge, than I had eyes only for the sublimity of the scenery that opened itself in succession as we passed. The water was as smooth as the cheek, as bright as the smile, and as blue as the eye of our first love. Indeed, it was "*deeply*, beautifully blue," as Lord Byron saith—to that *deeply* we owed every thing. The channel was so narrow, that, in many places, there was not sufficient room to tack the ship, even if she could have turned within her own length, and, in two remarkable points, we had not sufficient width to have carried our studding-sails. At one singularly romantic spot of this pass, the rocks far above our mast-heads leant over towards each other, and the ancient forest trees that crowned the heights, mingled their feathery branches, and permitted us to get a sight of the vaulted blue above us only at intervals, between the interstices of the dark-green foliage.

The seamen regarded their situation with wonder, not unmixed with awe. But the view was not the unvaried one of two gigantic walls festooned with flowers and crowned with trees. At intervals, we found the channel open into wide lagoons, with shelving and verdant shores, studded with white stone buildings, and well-cultivated plantations, and then the passage would narrow again suddenly, and the masses of rock rose so high on each side of us, as almost to exclude the light of the day. The way was tortuous, but not abruptly so; and, as we wound through it, ever and anon we came to some pictures inlet, some cool grotto, so beautiful that its very beauty must have peopled it with nymphs, for none could look upon them, without feeling, for a time, like poets. At the entrance, the heaving water rose and fell with a heavy moaning against the eternal bases of the rocks, though the surface in mid channel was perfectly smooth; but, as we advanced, this dull undulation gradually subsided, and its measured splash no longer echoed among the cliffs. The silence, as we proceeded, grew strange to us. An awe crept over us, like that which is felt upon the first entrance into a vast cathedral: and the gentle wind came to us noiselessly, and, dying away at intervals, left the ship silently stealing on, impelled for a space, by no visible means.

The hush throughout the ship was tomb like, and the few words of command, that from time to time, broke upon the ear, sounded hollow and unearthly from the reverberations of the overhanging precipices.

But quickly the scene would change; the jutting promontories and overtopping walls would recede, and a fairy spot encircled by forest-land would open upon us, studded with green islands, glorious in all the beauties of an eternal spring, and crowded and crowned with flowers of every hue, and of a brilliancy the most intense. We proceeded in this delightful manner for more than twelve miles, yet no one had appeared, in the least, to notice our approach. Had the most trivial attempt at defence been made, we could not have proceeded a quarter of the distance; for I verily believe that we passed by points so overhanging, that a couple of pounds of gunpowder, properly applied and fired at the right moment, would have tumbled fragments of solid rock upon us, that would have crushed us to the bottom in an instant, to mention nothing of the several protruding corners of this singular pass, on which two or three guns could have raked an approaching vessel for half an hour with impunity: as I have before stated that it would be impossible in those straitened passages to have turned a broadside to bear on any impediment. On we came, and at last a noble bay, or rather salt water lake opened upon us, with two wide rivers delivering their waters into the bottom of it. On our right lay the town of Aniana, with a fort upon a green mount overlooking the houses, and rising much higher than our floating pennant.

Our unexpected *entree*, like all other mistimed visits, caused the visited a terrible degree of confusion. Twelve or thirteen beautiful schooners had their sweeps out and all their sails set immediately. We having anchored opposite the town about noon, the breeze fell away into almost a perfect calm, and off they went, making the best of their way up the rivers. There were several other craft lying off the town, into which the inhabitants were crowding, with all their effects of any value, no doubt intending to go a little way up into the country also, to avoid the inconvenience of inopportune calls. The signal was made for our little squadron to get out their boats, chase, and capture.

CHAPTER VII.

Treats of kind intentions frustrated—A visiting party prevented by one ball too many having been given—And ready-made domestic happiness for strangers.

We first of all brought out the heavily-laden craft that were still near the town, and anchored them under our guns. To the privateers that showed their heels, the larger boats gave chase, and coming up with them, one after another, they were finally all captured. Had they but acted in combination, I think they might have resisted the boats with success; but their commanders seemed to have lost all presence of mind, in the confusion and astonishment into which our sudden appearance had thrown them.

Now, all this was very pleasant to us, *Messieurs les con- cernes*. We calculated upon having the whole wealth of the French town, and the little French fleet, converted into lawful prize-money. The deeply-laden poop-encumbered brigs and schooners, so ungracefully down by the stern, we imagined to be full of treasure. Visions of gold glittered before our mind's eye. We were about to recover the plunder of ages, for it must be confessed, that this same Aniana was no better than a haven for pirates. One of us was cruelly deceived in one respect. As yet we had met with no manner of resistance whatever—it was ten o'clock in the evening, the full moon giving us a very excellent imitation of daylight, when all the commanders who had dined with our yellow skipper came on deck, in the highest possible glee, delightedly rubbing their hands, and calculating each his share of the prize-money. All this hilarity was increased, every now and then, by some boats coming on board, and reporting to us, as commodore, another privateer or some fugitive merchantman taken, and then immediately shoving off in chase of others.

"Well, gentlemen," said our skipper, "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll send the marines on shore to-morrow, and take possession of the town. However, we will be very civil to the ladies;—we will, by Venus! As commanding officer, I'll permit of no rudeness."

"None whatever: who could think of frightening them? I suppose, Captain Reud, there could be no harm in going

ashore now and paying them a visit, just to alleviate their fears," was the reply of one of the commanders.

"Not to-night, not to-night. Depend upon it, all the best of the beauty, and the best of the wealth is safely stowed in this numerous fleet, quietly anchored about us: we have them all safe. There might be some villains lurking about the town with their cane knives in their belts: let us have all clear, and daylight before us. Not that I think there is any pluck among them—they have not spirit enough to throw a stone at a dog."

"Hardly had these taunting words escaped his lips, than "bang, crash," and a four-and-twenty pound shot came reeking through the waist-hammocks, for they had not yet been piped down, and covered us over with horse-hair, and an abominable composition called flock. The ball took a slanting direction through the main and orlop decks, and came out just below the water-line, making instantly a leak that we could not affect to despise.

"Droll," said Reud, shaking the dust from his person.

"Very," said his well-dined echoes around him.

If this be jesting, thought I, the cream of the joke is to come yet.

"Beat to quarters, Mr. Rattlin." The lieutenants and more than half of the crew were away in the boats. The men were soon at their guns, and, as they had been only slightly secured, they were ready to return the fire almost immediately. Upon looking up at the source of our annoyance, we found that it was a hopeless case. The height was so great, and so immediately above us, that, without heeling the frigate over, not a gun could be brought to bear. Another shot from the battery served to quicken our deliberations. There was no time to be lost.

Captain Reud sent the various commanders on board their respective vessels, with orders, as fast as any of their boats came in, to send them to us immediately, with their marines. For ourselves, all our boats were away, except the gig. Into that I jumped, followed by the captain and six marines. Every man, except a quarter-master and a couple of look-outs, was piped down below, with strict orders that they were to stay there and not expose themselves, and the ship was left in charge of the gunner, whilst the carpenter and his crew were actively employed in the wings, in plugging the shot-holes; for every ball that was fired came in somewhere upon the decks, and made its way through the ship's sides, low under the water.

However, annoying as this was, there were but two guns

playing upon us which, though served with admirable precision, fired but slowly. We had not lain on our oars a quarter of an hour between the ship and the shore, a space of not more than forty yards, when we were joined by seven boats of various dimensions, crammed as full of jollies as they could possibly hold. We were on shore in a moment, and, without much care as to forming, we all scrambled up the hill as fast as we could. It was very steep indeed, but we were not fired upon by any small arms whatever, and the guns could not be sufficiently depressed from the embrasures to be made to bear upon us. They certainly must have perceived us, for the moon was shining with singular splendour; but they seemed to take no notice of our advance, but fired twice upon the frigate as we were climbing or rather scrambling up.

This assault was an affair got up with so little premeditation, that Captain Reud had no other arms than his regulation sword; and his aide-de-camp, my redoubtable self, no other weapon of offence than a little crooked dirk, so considerably curved, that it would not answer the purpose of a dagger to stab with, and so blunt, that I am sure, though it might separate, it could not cut through a plum-pudding. Though I was approaching *pari passu* with my commander to a parapet, where there was no "imminent deadly breach," I was so much ashamed of my side-arms, that I would not expose them to the night air.

Up we tumbled close under the low, turf-constructed battlement, and, as we were in the act of scrambling over it, we received a straggling and ill-directed fire of musketry.

One hurrah from our party, and we were into the fort in a moment, and that on the two flanks as well as the front. For all the service that I could render, I might as well have charged, as a midshipman usually walks the deck, with my hands in my pockets. However, there we were face to face with our opponents, on the planked floor of the fort, just as they were making up their minds to run away. But they did not go quite so soon as they ought. In jumping over the turfy mound, it must be supposed, as was really the case, that it took us an instant or two to recover our equilibrium and ascertain the surety of our footing, but that instant was a very annoying one, for the Frenchman directly opposed to Captain Reud deliberately put his musket against the said captain's face, and though I, unarmed as I was, actually did strike up this musket as much as I was able, it had only the effect of making the bayonet at the end of it score a deep wound from the bridge of his nose to the top of his forehead, when the

trigger was pulled, and the whole crown of Captain Reud's skull completely blown away. The shot turned him round like a weathercock; I naturally half turned also, giving the enemy the advantage of studying my profile, whilst I endeavoured to support my captain in my arms, and then the same man, being bent on mischief, thrust his bayonet right through the back of my neck, grazing the vertebra, and entering on the right and coming out on the left side. Having in this manner a sheath for his weapon, the blackguard left it there, and thus having trussed me as with a skewer, showed me his back and fled. The butt-end of the musket falling to the ground, gave me a terrible wrench of the head, but relieved me at the same time of my incumbrance.

That was the first time I ever bled for my country. Indeed, I bled much more than my poor captain. However, the gentlemen of the fort rushed out as we rushed in, and rolled head over heels down the other side of the hill. Three or four were killed on the platform, among which, at the time, I devoutly wished was the inflicter of my wound; some were shot as they ran down the inland side of the hill, and the fort was ours, with the loss of one man killed and, I think, six wounded. My hurt was very trifling: a piece of adhesive plaister on the two orifices was all the surgical assistance that I either had or required. But the case with poor Reud was very different. I detest giving a revolting description of wounds; I shall only say, that this was a most dreadful one. He lay for a month almost in a state of insensibility; and though he lived for more than half a year with his head plated with silver, I know that he was never afterwards perfectly sane.

Walking about for a couple of days with a stiff neck, which was all the inconvenience I experienced, I assumed no little upon my firmness in storming, and on my honourable scars. The next morning all the prizes were secured, the town formally taken possession of, and, whilst Captain Reud lay in the torpor of what was all but death, it was deliberated what we should do with our conquest. It was a matter of some difficulty to decide upon. At this period, the two factions of the blacks, Petion's and Christophe's, held the western parts of the fine island of St. Domingo. The Spaniards had large possessions in the centre of the island, and the French still held a sway over the city of St. Domingo, and had a precarious footing in the eastern division, where we now were.

The place was too insignificant to garrison for a permanent conquest for the English. Many of our officers, and all the men, wished very naturally to plunder it; but the captain of

the other frigate, now the commander, would not listen to the proposal for a moment. However, we totally destroyed their small dock-yard, burned three fine schooners on the stocks, demolished the fort that had been so pernicious to Captain Reud, and which commanded the town; and then, the officers, and small parties of the ship's company were permitted to go on shore, and to live at free quarters upon the inhabitants. Strict orders were given to respect life and limb, and the honour of the ladies; and these orders were generally well enforced. It was certainly a pleasant thing to go on shore and walk into any house that pleased you, call for what you wanted, be very protecting, and, after having eaten and drunk to satiety, to depart without having to cast up the items of a bill.

These brigands were treated much too leniently, for I verily believe, that, for a vast number of years, all the male population were born, bred, lived, and had died pirates. They were of all nations of the earth; and, I must say, that this blending of the various races, had produced a very handsome set of men, and very beautiful women. There were many English females among them, who had been captured in our merchant vessels, and had been forced into marriages with their lawless captors. They were, for the most part, like the Sabine women, reconciled to their lot, and loath to leave their lords, their mansions, and their children.

The governor of the place, a French colonel, was captured as he endeavoured to make his escape in one of the schooner privateers. We had him on board of our ship for some time, and he confessed that the place flourished only by means of what he was pleased to designate as free trading.

The prizes, deeply laden, left the port one after the other, and then the men-of-war brigs, afterwards the sloop of war, and, at length, our consort, the frigate. We now lay alone in these quiet waters, and there we remained for nearly three months. All this time our captain could hardly be said to be living. No one was allowed to come aft beyond the mizen-mast. We always spoke with hushed voices, and walked about stealthily upon tip-toe. The bells ceased to be struck, and every precaution was taken to preserve the most profound silence. But our amusements on shore were more than commensurate for our restraints on board. Most of the officers and men took unto themselves wives, *pro hac vice*—chalked, or rather painted their names upon the doors of their mansions, and made themselves completely at home.

CHAPTER VIII.

Liaisons dangereuses—Ralph diveth into the dilemma of love, and admireth the fatherly conduct of the parent of his Dulcinea—Yet rageth and weepeth that she is a slave who hath enslaved him.

At this time, I had begun to look fierce if any one did not accede to me the rights and privileges of a man; and especially since I had received my bayonet wound: my vanity upon this score became insupportable. "Younker," was now a term of bitterness to me—on the word "lad" I looked with sovereign contempt—"boy," I had long done with. Heartily I prayed for a beard, but it came not, so, in order to supply the deficiency, I used to practise looking stern before my dressing-glass. But all my efforts at an outward semblance of manliness were vain, my face was much too fair and feminine, though my stature, and the firmness of my frame, were just what I wished. I was not on board the vessel after the first week that she lay in the port of Aniana, nor did I rejoice her until she was in the very act of sailing out of it.

How am I to approach this subject, so romantic, so delicious, and so delicate! How can I record events, that, in proving to me that I had a heart, first destroyed its strength by the sweet delirium of ecstasy, and thus, having enfeebled, almost broke it! Before, the poetic ardour had often been upon me; but the fire was lighted up at the shrine of vanity, and I sang for applause; it was to be rekindled by love; but to burn with a concealed fury, to be whispered only to my own soul—a feeling too great for utterance—too intense for song, was to devour me. I experienced ecstasies that were not happiness; I learnt the bitter truth, that rapture is not bliss.

About a week after we had obtained a quiet settlement in the town, and very many of us a quiet settlement in the hearts, as well as in the houses of the beautiful Creoles, and half castes, I also went on shore, with Modesty walking steadily on my right hand, whilst Madame Temptation was wickedly ogling me on the left. I looked in on the establishments of several of my brother officers, and certainly admired the rapidity with which they had surrounded themselves with all manner of domestic comforts, including wives, and, in some instances, large families of children. There was much more than ready made love in these arrangements; any one may

buy that for ready money; but a ready-made progeny, a ready-made household, and a ready-made wife, without one stiver of ready money, was the astonishment,—but English sailors can do any thing.

Well, at No. 14, Rue Coquine, I accepted the purser's invitation to dinner at four, *en famille*. It seemed quite natural.

"My dove," said he, "you'll get us a bit of fish. Mr. Rattlin loves fish."

"Certainly, my love," said Mrs. Purser *pro tempore*, looking a battery of amiabilities.

"Allow me to introduce you to my sister-in-law, Ma'am—mademoiselle D'Avalonge," said the purser, presenting a very well dressed young lady to me, with all the ease of a family-man.

The introduction took place immediately, and the lady and I found each other charming; indeed we said so. After a few more compliments, and a very pretty song, accompanied by the guitar, from mademoiselle, I took my leave, promising to be punctual to my appointment. I was not punctual—I never saw their dear faces again.

I left the town, and strolled up into the interior, keeping, however, our small fleet in sight, and walking seaward. I found the environs well cultivated, and the houses in the various plantations solidly built, and of stone. From every habitation that I passed I had pressing invitations to enter and refresh myself. These I declined. At length I arrived at a beautiful wood, evidently under the care of man; for the different trees were so arranged, as to produce a romantic effect. The shade that the lofty mahogany trees afforded was very grateful, for it was now a little after noon; and in this grove I paced slowly up and down, nursing my pride with all manner of conceits. Now wishing for some adventure, now fancying myself some king, now turning with pitying thoughts upon poor Reud, and then seeing the misery that we, in our honourable vocation, were daily causing, and the vice that we were daily acting, asking myself if there were any thing in life worth living for.

I well remember the crowding, the overbearing thoughts of that solitary and melancholy hour. It seemed to me as if I were compelled into a summing up of all my reflections, before I plunged into some unknown sea of mysterious events. After my mind had exhausted every object of contemplation that the scene around me had suggested, my thoughts travelled home—home! had I a home—had I any thing that loved me—any thing that, in the deep and soul-absorbing sense of the term, any thing that I loved? Should I ever obtain that object in existence, some one on whom to repose in

affliction, rejoice with in happiness—a pillow for my head, and a resting-place for my heart? I felt that, whilst I hated none—and there were many to whom I was attached—my heart panted for some one on whom to expend its energies. I panted for an object which I could worship, and by whom I should be worshipped. I may almost say, that I prayed for it—it was granted, and immediately.

In the distance, and much below where I stood, I heard voices in violent altercation; among which the “vast heavings,” “blow me tights,” “a stopper over all,” with other such nautical expletives, were predominant. I broke from my cover, and found myself immediately on a slope, before a very respectable habitation, nearly surrounded by boiling houses, and other outbuildings necessary to a sugar and coffee plantation. The group before me consisted of a small, energetic, old, and white haired Frenchman, neatly dressed in a complete suit of nankeen, with his broad-brimmed straw hat submissively in his hand, speaking all manner of fair and unintelligible French words to two Jacks, not of my ship, between which two, now pulled this way, now plucked that, was a timid and beautiful girl, of about fifteen years of age. There were several negroes, grinning and passive spectators of this scene. I understood it in a moment. So did my gentleman in the tarpaulin hats. They were off to me in a less time than a tongallant breeze takes to travel aft from the flying jib-boom, supposing the ship to be at single anchor.

I took out my pocket-book, wrote down their names, (most likely purser's ones,) and ordered them on board their vessel directly. They obeyed, or at least appeared to do so, and departed, casting many “a lingering, longing look behind,” leaving me the triumphant master of the field—the paladin, who had rescued the fair, for which I received much clapping of hands from the dark visages, and an intense look of gratitude from the fair, pale creature, whom I had released from the very equivocal rudeness of her admirers. The thanks from Monsieur Manuel, the father, were neither silent nor few, and, when he found that I could converse in French, he exhausted the vocabulary of that copious language of all its expressions of gratitude. I hardly could perceive that I had rendered any service at all; I had struck no blows, and had run no risk; I had merely spoken, and obedience followed. However, as I could not stem the torrent of his gratitude, I determined to divert its course, by yielding to his urgent entreaties to accompany him to his house, and recruit myself, after my perilous and heroic deed.

We were soon seated in the coolest room in his mansion,

and every West Indian luxury was quickly produced to tempt my palate. In fifteen minutes he had acquainted me with his parentage, his possessions, and his history. He assured me, with gesticulations, and a few oaths, that he was not at all connected with the brigands that inhabited the town below—that he despised them, knew them all to be pirates, or abettors of pirates, revolutionists, and republicans—that he was at heart, yea in heart and soul, a royalist, and devotedly attached to the *vieux regime*; that the estate he now cultivated he had inherited from his father, who had been one of the few spared in the revolt of the blacks; that he had been educated at Paris, but, for the last five-and-thirty years, had hardly been off his own grounds—that he had no wife, and, indeed, never married, had no family at all, excepting Josephine, who sat beside him, who was his very dear and only child.

He did not add "a slave, and the daughter of a slave."

I now looked upon her steadfastly for the first time, and with the most intense emotion; but it was pity. I had been sufficiently long in the West Indies to know exactly the relation in which she stood to her father. However, he went on to relate how she had been born to him by a beautiful mulatto, for whom he had given a great sum, yet, at this she startled not, moved not, blushed not. But her's was not the calmness of obduracy, but of innocence.

Strongly did I commiserate her, and gently strove to draw her into discourse. I found her ignorant, oh! how profoundly ignorant! She had no ideas beyond the estate in which she lived, and those that she had gathered from the gang of negroes that worked it. Her father had taught her nothing but to play a few tunes by ear upon the guitar, and sing some old French songs. Yet she had been accustomed to all the observances of a lady—had slaves to wait upon her, and was always elaborately, sometimes richly, dressed. Isolated as she had been, I soon discovered that she was a compound of enthusiasm, talent, and melancholy. She was little more than fifteen years old, yet that age, in those tropical climates, answers fully to an European one-and-twenty. In form, she was a perfect woman, light, rounded, and extremely active; all her motions were as graceful, and as undulating, as the gently-swelling billow. If she moved quickly, she bounded, if slowly, she appeared to glide on effortless through space. She had taken her lessons of grace in the woods, and her gymnasium had been among the sportive billows of the ocean. It is but of little use my describing her face, for every one supposes, that in these affairs, the author draws at once, as largely as he can, upon his own imagination, and as he dares,

upon the credulity of his readers. Though a slave, she had but little of the black blood in her—in her complexion none. She was not fair, but her skin was very transparent, very pure, and of a dazzling and creamy sort of whiteness. I have seen something like it on the delicate Chinese paintings of the secluded ladies of that very secluded empire, and should imagine it just such a permanent tint as the Roman Empress strove to procure by bathing every day in milk. Colour she had none, and thrilling must have been the emotions that could call it into her placid and pensive cheeks. Her features were not *chiselled*, and had any sculptor striven to imitate them on the purest marble, he would have discovered that chiselling would not do. They were at once formed and informed by the Deity. It is of no use talking about her luxurious and night-emulating hair, her lips, and those eyes, that seemed to contain, in their small compass, a whole sea of melancholy, in which love was struggling to support a half-drowned joy.

As I turned to converse with her she looked up to me confidently. She appeared, as it were, incessantly to draw me to her with her large black eyes: they seemed to say to me, "Come nearer to me, that I may understand thee. Art thou not something distinct from the beings that I see around me—something that can teach me what I am, and will also give me something to venerate, to idolize, and to love?" As I continued to speak to her, her attention grew into a quiet rapture, yet still a sublime melancholy seemed to hold her feelings in a solemn thralldom.

My name, my rank, and my situation were soon disclosed to the father and daughter; and the former seeing how entranced we were with each other's company, like a prudent parent, left us to ourselves. My French was much purer, and more grammatical than hers, hers much more fluent than mine. Yet, notwithstanding this deficiency on both sides, we understood each other perfectly, and we had not been above two hours together alone, before I told her that I loved her for her very ignorance, and she had confessed to me that she loved me, because—because—the reader will never guess why—because I was so like the good spirit that walked gently through the forest, and gathered up the fever-mists before they reached the dwellings of man.

I very naturally asked her if she had seen this being. She said no, but knew him as well as if she had; for old Jumbila, a negress, had so often talked to her about him, that her idea of him was as familiar to her as the presence of her father.

"You have much to unlearn, my sweet one," thought I, "and I shall be but too happy in being your preceptor."

"At sunset, Monsieur Manuel returned, led us into another apartment, where a not inelegant dinner was served up to us. Knowing the habits of my countrymen, we sate over some very superior claret, after Josephine had retired. I took this opportunity to reproach him in the gentlest terms that I could use, with the dreadful ignorance in which he had suffered a creature so lovely and so superior to remain.

His reply was a grimace, a hoisting of his shoulders above his head, an opening of his hands and fingers to their utmost extent, and a most pathetic "*Que voulez-vous ?*"

"I will tell you, friend Manuel," I answered, for his wine had warmed me much, his daughter more; "I would have had her taught, at least, to read and write, that she had an immortal soul, a soul as precious to its Maker as it was to herself. I would have had her taught to despise such superstitious nonsense as obeism, mist-spirits, and all the pernicious jargon of spells and fetishes. I would, my dear Manuel, have made her a fit companion for myself; for with such beauty and such a soul, I am convinced that she would realize female perfection as nearly as poor humanity is permitted to do."

"*Que voulez-vous ?*" again met my ears; but it was attended by some attempt at justification of his very culpable remissness. He assured me, that, according to the laws, social as well as judicial, a person of her class, were she possessed of all the attributes of an angel, could never be received into white society nor wed with any but a person of colour. The light of education, he asserted, would only the more show her her own degradation: he said he felt for her, deeply felt for her, and that he shuddered at the idea of his own death, for in that event he felt assured that she would be sold with the rest of the negroes on the estate, and be treated in all respects as a slave—and she had been so delicately nurtured. She had indeed:—her long white fingers and velvety hand bore sufficient testimony to this.

"But can you not manumit her?" said I.

"Impossible. When the island was more settled and better governed than now, the legal obstructions thrown in the way of the act were almost insuperable: at present it is impossible. I have no doubt that our blood-thirsty enemies, the Spaniards, who are our nearest neighbours, immediately you English leave the town, as you have dismantled our forts, and carried away almost all the male population captive, will come and take possession of this place—not that I care a sou for the brigands whom you have just routed out. I shall have to submit to the Spanish authority, and their slave laws are still

more imperative than ours, though they invariably treat their slaves better than any other nation. No, there is no hope for poor Josephine."

"Could you not send her to France?"

"*Sacre Dieu!* they guillotined all my relations, all my friends—all, all—and, my friend, I never made gold by taking a share in those long low schooners that you have kindly taken under your care. I have some boxes of doubloons stowed away, it is true. But, after all, I am attached to this place; I could not sell the estate for want of a purchaser; and I am surrounded by such an infernal set of rascals, that I never could embark myself with my hard cash without being murdered. No, we must do at Rome as the Romans do."

"A sweet specimen of a Roman you are," thought I, and I fell into a short reverie; but it was broken up most agreeably by seeing Josephine trip before the open jalousies with a basket of flowers in her hand. She paused for a moment before us, and looked kindly at her father and smilingly at me. It was the first joyous, really joyous smile that I had seen in her expressive countenance. It went right to my heart, and brought with it a train of the most rapturous feelings.

"God bless her heart; I do love her dearly!" said the old man. "I'll give you a convincing proof of it, my young friend, Rattlin. Ah! bah—but you other English have spoiled all—you have taken him with you."

"Who?"

"Why, Captain Durand. That large low black schooner was his. Yes, he would have treated her well, (said Monsieur le Pere, musing,) and he offered to sign an agreement never to put her to field work or to have her flogged."

"Put whom to field work?—flog whom?" said I, all amazement.

"Josephine, to be sure: had you not taken him prisoner, I was going, next month, to sell her to him for two hundred doubloons."

"Now, may God confound you for an unholy, unnatural villain!" said I, springing up, and overturning the table and wine into the fatherly lap of Monsieur Manuel. "If you did not stand there, my host, I would, with my hand on your throat, force you on your knees to swear that—that—that you'll never sell poor, poor Josephine. Flog her!" said I, shuddering and the tears starting into my eyes—"I should as soon have thought of flogging an empress's eldest daughter."

"Be pacified, my son," said the old slave dealer, deliberately.

erately clearing himself of the debris of the dessert—"be pacified, my son.

The words, "my son," went with a strange and cheering sound into my very heart's core. The associations that they brought with it were blissful—I listened to him with calmness.

"Be pacified, my son," he continued, "and I will prove to you that I am doing every thing for the best. The old colonel, our late governor, would have given three times the money for her. I could not do better than make her over to a kind-hearted man, who would use her well, and who, I think, is fond of her. Not to part with her for a heavy sum would be fixing a stigma upon her;" and wretched as all this reasoning appeared to be, I was convinced that the man had really meant to have acted kindly by selling his own daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

Ralph deserteth his duty—All for love, or "the world well lost," with his wits into the bargain—Very nice disquisitions on honour.

THE *soyez tranquille* of Monsieur Manuel had but a transient effect. It brought no consolation with it. What I had heard seemed to clog the usual healthy beating of my heart; my respiration laboured, and I fell into a bitter reverie. The profoundest pity, the most impassioned admiration, and the most ardent desire to afford protection—are not these the ingredients that make the all-potent draught of love? Let universal humanity reply—I loved. But the feeling, generally so blissful, came upon my young heart, and steeped it in the bitterness of apprehension. My bosom was swollen with big resolves, with the deepest affection for one, and hate for all the rest of my species; and the thought came over me vividly, of flight with the young and pensive beauty into the inaccessible seclusion of the woods, and of the unalloyed happiness and the imaginary glories of a savage life. In this sudden depression of spirits, my mind looked not loathingly

on mutual suicide. It was a black and a desponding hour, and fell upon me with the suddenness of a total eclipse on a noontide summer's day.

I sat with my clasped hands between my knees, and my head hanging upon my breast, almost unconscious of the black servitors around me, who were re-ordering the room that I had so recently disarranged. I noted all this as something that did not belong to the world in which I had existence. Every thing around me seemed the shadows of somebody's dream, in which I had no part, and could take no interest. I had but two all-absorbing ideas; and these were—injustice and Josephine. So distraught was I with the vastness of the one and with the loveliness of the other, that, when the young and splendid reality stole into the apartment softly, and moved before my eyes in all the fascination of her gracefulness, yet was I scarcely conscious of the actual presence of her whose ideal existence was torturing my brain.

To the cold, the unimpassioned, or the unpoetical, this may seem impossible. I will not go into metaphysical reasonings on the subject. I only know that it was true. Whilst I was conceiving her flying from oppression with me, her protector, into some grim solitude, she came and placed herself, almost unnoticed, by my side, took my unresisting hands between her own, and, seeing how little I appeared to notice the endearment, she gradually sank on her knees before me, and, placing her forehead upon my hands, remained for a space in silence. Feeling her hot tears trickling through my fingers called me back from my dark reverie; and, as I became aware of the present, a sigh so deep and so long burst forth, and it seemed to rend my bosom.

Those dark, lustrous, melancholy eyes, swimming in tears, were then lifted up to mine. Ages of eloquence were contained in that one look. In it I read the whole story of her life, the depth of her love, the fealty of her faith, and the deep, the unspeakable prayer for sympathy, for love, and for protection. The mute appeal was unanswerable. It seemed to be conveyed to me by the voice of destiny; to my mind, louder and more awful than thunder. At that moment I pledged myself eternally to her; and, gradually drawing up her yielding, light, and elastic form from my knees to my bosom, I sobbed out, "Whilst I breathe, dearest, thou shalt never writhe under the lash;" and then, giving way to an uncontrollable passion of weeping, I mingled my tears with her's—and we were happy. Yes, our young love was baptized with tears—an ominous and a fitting rite. We cried in each other's arms like children, as we were; at first, with

anguish ; then, with hope and affection ; and at length, in all the luxury of a new-born bliss.

When this passion had a little subsided, and smiles, and murmuring ejaculations of happiness, had driven away the symbols of what is not always anguish, old Manuel approached, and appeared much pleased at the tokens of affection that we mutually lavished upon each other. And then, with my arm encircling Josephine's slender waist, and her fair face upon my shoulder, he began his artful discourse. Gradually, he led me to speak of myself, my friends, my views ; and, ultimately, my strange and mysterious story was fully unfolded. Even in this prolonged relation, I was amply rewarded by the impassioned looks, at once so tender and so thrilling, of the beauteous listener by my side, and by the ready tear at every passage that told of suffering ; the fond creature still creeping more closely to me at every instance of danger ; and bright the beam of triumph would flash from her eye, responsive to every incident of my success.

When all was told, and half wondering, and faintly smiling, I finished by the rather silly expression of—"And here I am," I was immediately imprisoned in the arms of Josephine, as she pathetically exclaimed, "And for ever."

"Josephine speaks well," said Manuel, rising and placing patriarchally a hand on the head of each of us. "My children, would it were for ever ! It appears, by the narrative, that Monsieur has done us the great honour to relate that he is a castaway—an unowned—and, if my young friend makes use of all the wisdom he doubtless possesses in so high a degree, he will join us in blessing Providence, that has given the gallant young homeless one a home ; for I need not tell him, that all he sees around is his, the land and the house, and, to the hitherto unloved, a young and tender heart that will cherish him, to the fatherless a father."

And thus the old *emigre* concluded his speech, with a tear glistening in his eye—and an unexceptionable bow. Had he flung himself into my arms, the effect would have been complete. I hate to record scenes of this sort ; but, as I have imposed the task upon myself, I will go through it ; and, though the temptation is great, seeing what I was then, the disciple as well as the offspring of romance, and what I now am, worldly in the world's most sordid worldliness, to do my penance in self-mockery—for the sake of the young hearts still unseared, I will refrain.

I was exceedingly affected and agitated at this appeal, the purport of which I could not misunderstand. My emotions, at first, prevented me from speaking. I arose from the sofa,

Josephine still hanging upon my shoulder, and, taking her father's hand, led them both to the window. The sun was near the horizon; and mountain, sea, and green valley, and dark forest, were steeped in a roseate glory. About three miles distant, and beneath us, my gallant frigate sate in the bosom of the gently rippling waters, like a sultana upon her embroidered divan, her ensign and her pennant streaming out fair and free to the evening breeze. I pointed to her, and with a voice scarcely articulate—for, at that period, the sob would rise too readily to my throat, and the tear start too freely to my eye—I exclaimed—

“Behold my home—my country claims the duty of a son!”

“Monsieur knows best,” said Manuel, almost coldly. “His countrymen have conquered us: you are a gallant race, undoubtedly, but one of them has not shown much mercy to my daughter.”

The passionate girl was at my feet—yes, kneeling at my feet, and her supplicating hands were clasped in that attitude of humility, that is due only to God. Who taught her the infinite pathos of that beautiful posture? Taught her! She had no teachers, save Nature and Love.

“Josephine,” said I, lifting her gently up, and kissing her fair brow, “you are breaking my heart. I cannot stand this—I must rush out of the house. I have never said I loved you.”—(Mean subterfuge!)

“But you do, you do—it is my fate—it is your’s—for three years I have been expecting you—disbelieve me not—ask the Obeah woman. It is true,”—and then, hurrying out the words like the downpouring of the mountain torrent, she continued, “Do you love me?—do you love me?—do you love me?”

“I do, Josephine—I do—distractedly! But stern honour stands in the way.”

“And what is this honour?” she exclaimed with genuine simplicity; for it was evident that, if she had ever heard the word before, she had not the remotest idea of its meaning: “*Et quelle est cette honneur-la?*” and there was contempt in her tone.

I had no words to reply.

“Will this honour do that for you which my father—which I—will do? What has this honour done for him?—tell me, father! Has it put that gay blue jacket on him, or that small sword by his side? Show him, my dear father, the rich dresses that we have, and the beautiful arms. Will honour watch you in your hours of sickness, take you out in the

noon-day heats, and show you the cool shady places and the refreshing rippling springs? What is this honour, that seems to bid you to break my heart, and make me die of very grief?"

"Monsieur Manuel," said I, extremely confused, "have the kindness to explain to dear Josephine what honour is."

"A rule of conduct," he replied with severity, "that was never recorded, never understood, and which men construe just as suits their convenience. One honest impulse of the heart is worth all the honour I ever heard of."

This was a delicate helping of a friend in a dilemma. I turned for relief from the sarcastic father to the beautiful countenance of the daughter, and I there beheld an expression of intense sorrow that agonized me. Her sudden and, to me, totally unexpected animation had disappeared: Melancholy seemed to have drooped her darkest wings over her. I thought that she must soon die under their noxious shadow. For one instant, my eyes caught her's: I could not stand the appeal.

"I will stay," said I gently, "until the ship sails."

I had then, for the first time, to witness the enthusiasm of the melancholy temperament—the eloquence of unschooled nature. The bending figure, that seemed to collapse in weakness upon my supporting arm, suddenly flung herself from me; her rounded and delicate figure swelled at once into sudden dignity; her muscles assumed the rigidity, yet all the softness of a highly-polished Grecian statue; and stood before me, as if by enchantment, half woman, half marble, beautiful inexpressibly. I was sorely tried. There was no action, no waving of the arms, as she spoke. Her voice came forth musically, as if from some sacred oracle, that oracle having life only in words. Monsieur Manuel had very wisely departed.

"Not an hour—not a minute—not an instant, or—for ever! Young sir, you have already staid too long, if you stay not always. Leave me to dream of you, and to die. The thorn is in my heart: it may kill me gradually.—Go. Why, sir, have you looked upon me as man never before looked? Why, why have you mingled your false tears with mine, that were so true—and, oh, so loving! But, what am I, who thus speak so proudly to a being, whom, if I did not know he was treacherous, I should think an angel? (*un des bons esprits.*) I, a poor weak ignorant girl of colour—born of a slave, to slavery—whose only ambition was to have been loved, loved for a short, short while—for know, that I am to die early—I should not have troubled you long. But you are too good for me—I was a presumptuous fool. Go, and at once, and

take with you all that I have to give—the blessing of a young born-bonds-woman.”

All this time she had stood firmly and nearly motionless, with her hands folded beneath her heaving bosom, at some distance from me. I approached her with extended arms, and had some such foolish rhapsody on my tongue as “Beautiful daughter of the sun,” for I had already contemplated her under a new character, when, retreating and waving me from her, she continued—

“Already too much of this—let me die by cruelty rather than by caresses, which are the worst of cruelty. I feel a new spirit living within me. I am a child no more. Yesterday I should have crouched before you, as one degraded, as I ought to do. You have pressed me to your bosom—you have spoken to me as your equal—even your tears have bathed my brow. You have ennobled me. Oh! it is a happiness and a great glory. I, formerly so humble, command you to go—go, dear, dear, Ralph. You will not kill me quite by going *now*; therefore, be generous, and go.”

I was already sufficiently in love, and began to feel ashamed of myself, for not having, as yet, caught a little of her enthusiasm.

“Josephine,” said I, in a quiet, serious tone, “give me your hand.” I took it—it was deadly cold. At that moment all her best blood was rallying round her young heart. I led her to the open window, and showed her the noble frigate so hateful to her sight, and said, “Dear Josephine, in that ship there are more than three hundred gallant fellows, all of whom are my countrymen, and some of them my familiar friends. I have often shared with them danger, unto the very jaws of death. I have broken my bread with some of them, constantly, for nearly three years. These are all claims on me: you see that I am speaking to you calmly. I had no idea what a little impassioned orator you were—do not look so dejected and so humble. I love you for it the more. I only made the remark to convince you that what I now say is not the mere prompting of a transient impulse. But, Josephine, in my own far-away land, I have also a few friends; nor am I wholly a cast-away; there is a mystery about my origin, which I wish to dissipate, yet that I cherish. If I conduct myself as I have hitherto done, in time I shall have the sole control and government of a vessel, as proud as the one before you, and of all the noble spirits it will contain. The mystery of which I have spoken I am most sanguine will be cleared up; and I may, peradventure, one day take my place among the nobles of my land, as it now is among the nobles of the sea. Weep not thus,

my love, or you will infect me with emotions too painful to be borne. Let us be calm for a little space. The reign of passion will commence soon enough. Mark me, Josephine. For you—God forgive me if I commit sin!—for you, I cast off my associates, sever all my ties of friendship, let the mystery of my origin remain unravelled, renounce the land of my birth—for you, I encounter the peril of being hung for desertion. Josephine, you will incur a great debt—a heavy responsibility. My heart, my happiness, is in your hands. Josephine, I stay!”

“For ever?”

“For ever!” A wild shriek of joy burst from her delighted lips, as she leaped to my bosom; and, for the first time, our lips sealed the mysterious compact of love. After a moment, I gently released myself from the sweet bondage of her embrace, and said, “Dear Josephine, this cannot be to me a moment of unalloyed joy. You see the sun is half below the horizon; give me one moment of natural grief; for, so surely as I stay here, so surely, like that orb, are all my hopes of glory setting, and for ever.” And the tears came into my eyes as I exclaimed, “Farewell, my country—farewell, honour—Eos, my gallant frigate, fare thee well!”

As if instinct with life, the beautiful vessel answered my apostrophe. The majestic thunder of her main-deck gun boomed awfully, and methought sorrowfully, over the waters, and then bounded among the echoes of the distant hills around and above me, slowly dying away in the distant mountains. It was the gun which, as commodore, was fired at sunset.

“It is all over,” I exclaimed. “I have made my election—leave me for a little while alone.”

CHAPTER X.

Ralph falleth into the usual delusion of supposing himself happy—wistheth it may last all his life, making it a reality—As yet no symptoms of it dispelling; but the brightest sunset may have the darkest night.

SHE bounded from me in a transport of joy, shouting, "He stays, he stays!" and I heard the words repeated among the groups of negresses, who loved her; it seemed to be the burthen of a general song, the glad realization of some prophecy; for, ere the night was an hour old, the old witch, who had had the tuition of Josephine, had already made a mongrel sort of hymn of the affair, whilst a circle of black chins were wagging to a chorus of

"Goramity good, buchra body stays!"

I saw no more of Josephine that night. The old gentleman, her father, joined me after I had been alone nearly two hours—two hours, I assure the reader, of misery.

I contemplated a courtship of some decent duration, and a legal marriage at the altar. I tried to view my position on all sides, and thus to find out that which was the most favourable for my mind's eye to rest upon. It was but a disconsolate survey. Sometimes a dark suspicion, that I repelled from me as if it were a demon whispering murder in my ear, would hint to me the possibility that I was entrapped. However, the lights that came in with Monsieur Manuel dissipated them and darkness together. He behaved extremely well—gave me an exact account of all his possessions, and of his ready money, the latter of which was greatly beyond my expectations, and the former very considerable.

He immediately gave me an undertaking, that he would, if I remained with him, adopt me as his son, allow me during his life a competency fit to support me and his daughter genteelly, and to make me his sole heir at his death. This undertaking bound him also to see the proper documents duly and legally drawn up by a notary, so as to render the conditions of our agreement binding on both parties. We then spoke, as father and son, of our future views. We were determined to leave the island, immediately we could get any thing like its value for the plantation and the large gang of negroes upon it. But where go to then? England!—my desertion. France!—yes, it was there that we were to spend

our lives. And thus we speculated on future events, that the future never owned.

I have said before that, during the whole time that I was in the navy, I never was intoxicated—and never once swallowed spirituous liquors. Both assertions are strictly true. This memorable evening, over our light supper, I drank, perhaps, two glasses of claret more than was my wont at Captain Reud's table. I was excessively wearied, both in mind and body. I became so unaccountably and lethargically drowsy, that, in spite of every effort of mine to the contrary, I fell fast asleep in the midst of a most animated harangue of the good Manuel, upon the various perfections of his lovely daughter—a strange subject for a lover to sleep upon; but so it was. Had Josephine's nurse and Obeah woman any thing to do with it? perhaps. They are skilful druggers. If my life, and the lives of all those dearer to me than life itself, had depended upon my getting up and walking across the room, I could not have done it. How I got to bed I know not; but I awoke in the morning in luxuriant health, with a blushing bride upon my bosom.

And then ensued days of dreamy ecstasy; my happiness seemed too great, too full, too overflowing, to be real. Every thing around me started into poetry. I seemed to be under the direction of fairy spirits: all my wants were cared for as if by invisible hands. It appeared to me that I had but to wish, and gratification followed before the wish was half formed. I was passive, and carried away in a trance of happiness. I was beset with illusions; and so intense were my feelings of rapture, mingled with doubt, and my blissful distraction so great, that it was late in the day before I noticed the dress I had on. The light and broad-brimmed planter's hat, the snowy-white jean jacket and trowsers, and the infinitely fine linen shirt, with its elaborately laced front, had all been donned without my noticing the change from my usual apparel. It was a dress, from its purity and its elegance, worthy of a bridegroom. I learnt afterwards, that Josephine's old negress-nurse had, with many and powerful incantations—at least, as powerful as incantations always are—buried under six feet of earth every article of clothing in which I had first entered the mansion.

Well, there we were, a very pretty version of Paul and Virginia—not perhaps quite so innocent, but infinitely more happy, roving hand in hand through orange bowers and aromatic shades. Love is sweet, and a first love very, very delightful; but, when we are not only loved, but almost worshipped, that, that is the incense that warms the heart and in-

toxicates the brain. Wherever I turned, I found greetings and smiles, and respectful observance hovered along my path. The household adored their young mistress, and me through her.

Old Manuel seemed serenely happy. He encouraged us to be alone with each other. I could write volumes upon the little incidents, and interesting ones too, of this singular honeymoon. I observed no more bursts of passion in Josephine; her soul had folded its wings upon my bosom, and there dreamed itself away in a tender and loving melancholy. How I now smile, and perhaps could weep, when I call to mind all her little artifices of love to prevent my ever casting my eyes upon the hated ship! As I have related before, our little squadron at anchor in this secluded bay, departed one by one, leaving only the Eos, with her sorely-wounded captain; yet, though I saw them not, I knew by Josephine's triumphant looks when a vessel had sailed. All the *jalousies* in front of the house were nailed up, so that, if by chance I wandered into one of the rooms in that quarter, I saw nothing.

I had been domesticated in this paradise—a fool's perhaps, but still a paradise—a month; and I was sitting alone in the shade, reading, behind the house, when Josephine flew along the avenue of lemon-trees, and flung herself into my arms, and, sobbing hysterically, exclaimed, "My dear, dear Ralph, now you are almost wholly mine! there is only one left."

"And that one, my Josephine?"

"Speak not of it, think not of it, sweet; it is not your's. But, swear, swear to me again, you will never more look upon it; do, dearest, and I will learn a whole column extra of words in two syllables."

And I repeated the often-iterated oath; and she sate down tranquilly at my feet, like a good little girl, and began murmuring the task she was committing to memory.

And how did the schooling get on! Oh! beautifully; we had such sweet and so many school-rooms, and interruptions still more sweet and numerous. Sometimes, our hall of study was beneath the cool rock, down the sides of which, green with age, the sparkling rill so delightfully trickled; sometimes, in the impervious, quiet, and flower-enamelled bower, amidst all the spicy fragrance of tropical shrubs; and sometimes in the solemn old wood, beneath the boughs of trees that had stood for uncounted ages. And the interruptions! Repeatedly the book and the slate would be cast away, and we would start up, as if actuated by a single spirit, and chase some singularly beautiful humming-bird; sometimes,

the genius of frolic would seize us, and we would chase each other round and round the old mahogany trees, with no other object than to rid ourselves of our exuberance of happiness; but the most frequent interruptions were when she would close her book, and, bathing me in the lustre of her melancholy eyes, bid me tell her some tale that would make her weep; or, with a pious awe, request me to unfold some of the mysteries of the universe around her, and commune with her of the attributes of their great and beneficent Creator.

Was not this a state of the supreme happiness? Joy seemed to come down to me from heaven in floods of light; the earth to offer up her incense to me, as I trod upon her beautiful and flower-encumbered bosom; the richly-plumaged birds to hover about me, as if sent to do me homage; even the boughs of the majestic trees as I passed them seemed to wave to me a welcome. Joy was in me and around me; there was no pause in my blissful feelings. I required no relaxation to enjoy them the more perfectly, for pleasure seemed to succeed pleasure in infinite variety. It was too glorious to last. The end was approaching, and that end was very bitter.

CHAPTER XI.

A short chapter and a miserable one—the less that is said of it the better.

I HAD been living in the plantation nearly three months. My little wife, for ~~such~~ I held her to be, had made much progress in her education—more in my affection she could not. I had already put her into joining hand; and I began to be as proud of her dawning intellect as I was of her person and of her love. I had renounced my country, and, in good faith, I had intended to have held by her for ever; and, when I should find myself in a country where marriage with one born in slavery was looked upon as no opprobrium, I had determined that the indissoluble ceremony should be legally performed. To do all this I was in earnest; but, events, or destiny, or by whatever high-sounding term we may call those occurrences which force us on in a path we wish not to tread, ruled it fearfully otherwise.

I religiously abstained from looking towards the ship, or even the sea; yet, I plainly saw, by the alternations of hope, and joy, and fear, on Josephine's sweet countenance, that something of the most vital importance was about to take place. They could not conceal from me that parties of men had been searching for me, because, for a few days, I had been in actual hiding with Josephine, three or four miles up in the woody mountain. I must hurry over all this; for the recollection of it, even at this great lapse of time, is agonizing. The night before the Eos sailed she would not sleep—her incessant tears, the tremulous energy with which she clasped me and held me for hours, all told the secret that I wished not to know. All that night she watched, as a mother watches a departing and a first-born child—tearfully—anxiously—but, overcome with fatigue, and the fierce contention of emotions as the morning dawned, her face drooped away from mine, her clasping arms gradually relaxed, and, murmuring my name with a blessing, she slept. Did she ever sleep again? May God pardon me, I know not!

I hung over her, and watched her, almost worshipping, until two hours after sunrise. I blessed her as she lay there in all her tranquil beauty, fervently, and, instead of my prayers, I repeated over and over again my oath, that I would never desert her. But some devil, in order to spread the ashes

of bitterness through the long path of my after-life, suggested to me that now, as the frigate had sailed for some time, there could be no danger in taking one last look at her; indeed, the thought of doing so took the shape of a duty.

I stole out of bed, and crept softly round to the front of the house. The place where the gallant ship had rode at anchor for so many weeks was vacant—all was still and lonely. I walked on to a higher spot; and, far distant among the sinuities of the romantic entrance to the harbour, my eye caught for a moment her receding pennant. I, therefore, concluded that every thing was safe—that I was cut off, and for ever, from my country.

A little qualm of remorse passed through my bosom, and then I was exceeding glad. The morning was fresh, and the air invigorating, and I determined to walk down to the beautiful minutely-sanded beach, and enjoy the refreshment of the sea-breeze just sweeping gently over the bay. To do this I had to pass over a shoulder of land to my left. I gained the beach, and stood upon it for some minutes with folded arms. This particular walk had been so long debarred to me, that I now enjoyed it the more. I was upon the point of turning round and seeking the nest where I had left my dove sleeping in conscious security, when, to my horror, I beheld the Eos's pinnace, full-manned and double-banked, the wave foaming up her cutwater, and roaring under her sixteen oars, rapidly round the rocky hummock that formed the eastern horn of the little bay. Her prow soon tore up the sand; and the third lieutenant, a master's mate, and the officer of marines, with four privates, leaped ashore immediately.

For a few moments I was paralyzed with terror, and then, suddenly springing forward, I ran off at the top of my speed. I need not say that my pursuers gave chase heartily. I had no other choice but to run on straight before me; and that unfortunately was up a rocky, rugged side of a steep hill, that rose directly from the beach, covered with that abominable vegetable, or shrub, the prickly pear. I was in full view; and, being hailed, and told that I should be fired upon if I did not bring-to, in the space of a short three minutes, before I was out of breath, I was in the hands of my captors—a prisoner.

I prayed—I knelt—I wept. It was useless. I have scarcely the courage to write what then took place, it was so fearful—it was so hideous. Bounding down the hill, in her night-dress, her long black hair streaming like a meteor behind her, and her naked feet, usually so exquisitely white, covered with blood, came Josephine, shrieking, "Ralph! Ralph!" Her

voice seemed to stab my bosom like an actual knife. Behind her came running her father, and a number of negro men and women. Before she could reach me, they had flung me into the stern sheets of the boat.

"Shove off! shove off!" shouted the lieutenant, and the boat was immediately in motion. Like a convicted felon, or a murderer taken in the fact, I buried my craven head in my knees, and shut my eyes. I would not have looked back for kingdoms. But, I could not, or did not, think of preventing myself from hearing. The boat had not pulled ten yards from the beach, when I heard a splash behind us, and simultaneous cries of horror from the boat's crew and those on shore; among which the agonized voice of the heart-broken father rose shrilly, as he exclaimed, "Josephine, my child!" I looked up for a moment, but dared not look round; and I saw every man in the boat dashing away the tears from his eyes with one hand, as he reluctantly pulled his oar with the other.

"Give way! give way!" roared the lieutenant, stamping violently against the grating at his feet. "Give way! or, by G—d, she'll overtake us!"

The poor girl was swimming after me.

"Rattlin," said Selby, stooping down and whispering in my ear, "Rattlin, I can't stand it; if it was not as much as my life was worth, I would put you on shore directly." I could answer him only by a long convulsive shudder. The horrible torment of those moments!

Then ascended the loud howling curses of the negroes behind us. The seamen rose up upon their oars, and, with a few violent jerks, the pinnace shot round the next point of land, and the poor struggler in the water was seen no more. Tidings never after came to me of her. I left her struggling in the waters of the ocean. My first love, and my last—my only one.

I was taken on board stupified. I was led up the side like a sick man. No one reproached me; no one spoke to me. I became physically, as well as mentally, ill. I went to my hammock with a stern feeling of joy, hoping soon to be lashed up in it, and find my grave in the deep blue sea. At first, my only consolation was enacting over and over again all the happy scenes with Josephine; but, as they invariably terminated in one dreadful point, this occupation became hateful. I then endeavoured to blot the whole transaction from my memory—to persuade myself that the events had not been real—that I had dreamed them—or read them long ago in some old book. But, the mind is not so easily cheated—re-morse not so soon blinded.

CHAPTER XII.

The Captain taketh to tantrums—and keepeth on board monkeys, bears, and discipline. It is feared, also, that the moon hath too much to do with his observations.

NOTWITHSTANDING my misery, I became convalescent. I went to my duty doggedly. Every body saw and respected my grief; and the affair was never mentioned to me by any, with one only exception, and that was six months after, by a heavy brutal master's mate, named Pigtop, who had been in the pinnace that brought me off.

He came close to me, and, without preparation, he electified me by drawing out, "I say, Rattlin, what a mess you made of it at Aniana! That girl of your's, to my thinking, burst a blood-vessel as she was giving you chase. I saw the blood bubble out of her mouth and nose."

"Liar!" I exclaimed, and seizing a heavy block that one of the afterguard was fitting, I felled him to the deck.

The base-hearted poltroon went and made his complaint to Captain Reud, who ordered him to leave the ship immediately he came into harbour.

We must now retrograde a little in the narrative, in order to show what events led to the disastrous catastrophe I have just related. Captain Reud, having been lying for many, many weeks, apparently unconscious of objects around him, one morning said, in a faint, low voice, when Dr. Thompson and Mr. Farmer, the first lieutenant, were standing near him, "Send Ralph Rattlin to read the Bible to me."

Now, since my absence, some supposed I had been privately stabbed by one of the few ferocious and angry marauders still left in the town; but, as no traces of my body could be found, still more of my shipmates believed that I had deserted. In plain sincerity, these latter friends of mine were, as our Transatlantic brethren say, pretty considerably, slap-dash-ically right. However, as the shock to the wounded captain would have been the greater to say that I had been assassinated, they chose the milder alternative, and told him that "they feared that I had deserted."

Captain Reud merely said, "I don't believe it," turned his face to the bulkhead, and remained silent for three or four days more. Still, as he was proceeding towards convalescence, he began to be more active, or, rather, ordered more

active measures to be taken to clear up the mystery of my disappearance. Parties were consequently sent to scour the country for miles round; but I was too well concealed to permit them to be of any utility. The only two seamen that had seen me near Manuel's premises belonged to the frigate, which had sailed before my captain had recovered his faculties.

But I was not to be so easily given up; perhaps he remembered that what remained of life to him was preserved by me, and, notwithstanding his cruel usage, I well knew that he entertained for me a sincere affection. As the Eos got under weigh, after remaining so long at anchor in the port, that the men observed she would shortly ground upon the beef-bones that their active masticators had denuded, and which were thrown overboard, the wind was light, and the boats were all out towing, with the exception of the pinnace, which was ordered to sweep round the bay and look into all the inlets, in order to seek for some vestige of my important self. For good or for evil, the heart-rending results ensued.

How short is the real romance of life! A shout of joy—a pulsation of ecstasy—and it is over! In the course of my eventful life, I have seen very fair faces and very many beautiful forms. The fascinations of exterior loveliness I have met combined with high intellect, unswerving principles, and virtuous emotions, awful from their very holiness. The fair possessors of many of these lofty attributes I have sometimes wooed and strove to love; but, though I often sighed and prayed for a return of that heart-whole and absorbing passion, there was no magic, no charm, to call the dead embers into life. That young and beautiful savage swept from my bosom all the tenderer stuff: she collected the fresh flowers of passion, and left—it is of no consequence—Josephine, farewell.

Let us talk idly. It is a droll world: let us mock each other, and call it mirth. There is my poor half-deranged captain cutting such antics that even authority with the two-edged sword in his hand cannot repress the outbursting of ignoble derision. First of all, he takes a mania for apes and monkeys; disrates all his midshipmen, taking care, however, that they still do their duty; and makes the ship's tailor rig out their successors in uniform. The officers are aghast, for the maniac is so cunning, and the risk of putting a superior officer under an arrest so tremendous, that they knew not what to do. Besides, their captain is only mad on one subject at one time. Indeed, insanity seems sometimes to find a vent in monomania, actually improving all the faculties on all other points. Well, the monkey midshipmen did not behave

very correctly; so, Captain Reud had them 'one forenoon all tied up to one of his guns in the cabin, and, one after the other, well flogged with the cat-o'-nine-tails. It was highly ludicrous to see the poor fellows waiting each for his turn, well knowing what was to come; they never, than when under the impression of their fears, looked more human. That night they stole into the cabin, by two and three, in the dead of the night, and nearly murdered their persecutor. This looked very like combination, and an exercise of faculties that may be nearly termed reasoning.

They were all thrown overboard. The next fantasy was the getting up of the forecastle carronades into the tops, thereby straining the ship and nearly carrying away the masts. That folly wore out, and the guns came down to their proper places. Then a huge bear came on board—a very gentlemanly, dignified fellow; never in a hurry, and who always moved about with a gracious deliberation. Captain Reud amused himself by endeavouring to teach him to dance; and a worthless blackguard who could play on the pipe and tabor, and who probably had led a bear about the country, was taken into especial grace and was loaded with benefits, in order to assist his captain in his singular avocations.

"Come and see my bear dance, do come and see him dance," was now the little Creole's continual cry. But the bear did not take his tuition kindly, and grew daily more ferocious; till, at length, seizing his opportunity, he caught up the diminutive skipper and nearly hugged the breath out of his body, and almost rubbed his red nose off his yellow face in endeavouring to bite him through his muzzle. The star of Ursa Major was no longer in the ascendant, and he was battered away, with the master of the first merchant vessel we met, for a couple of game-cocks; and the bear-leader was turned back into the waist, and flogged the next day for impertinence, whilst, two days before, the vagabond was too proud to say "sir" to a middy.

But it would be ridiculous to enumerate the long succession of these insane whimsicalities, each later one being more *bizarre* than the preceding.

Whether man be mad or not, Christmas will come round again. Now, Jack, from time immemorial, thinks that he has a right undeniable to get drunk on that auspicious day. In harbour, that right is not discussed by his officers, but is usually exercised *sub silentio* under their eyes, with every thing but silence on the part of the exercisers. Even at sea, without the ship be in sight of the enemy, or it blows hard enough to blow the ship's coppers overboard, our friends think

it hard, very hard, to have their cups scored next morning upon their back; and, indeed, to keep all a frigate's crew from intoxication on a Christmas-day would be something like undertaking the labour of Sisyphus, for, as fast as one man could be frightened or flogged into sobriety, another would become glorious.

It was for this very reason that Captain Reud, the Christmas-day after he had received his wound, undertook the task; and, as the weather was fine, he hoped to find it not quite so hard as rolling a stone up a steep hill, and invariably seeing it bound down again before it attains the coveted summit. Immediately after breakfast, he had the word passed fore and aft that no man should be drunk that day, and that six dozen, (not of wine), would be the reward of any who should dare, in the least, to infringe that order. What is drunkenness? What it is we can readily pronounce, when we see a man under its revolting phases. What is not drunkenness is more hard to say. Is it not difficult to ascertain the nice line that separates excitement from incipient delirium? Not at all, to a man like Captain Reud. To understand a disease thoroughly, a physician will tell you that you will be much assisted by the having suffered from it yourself. Upon this self-evident principle, our *Æsculapius* with the epauletts was the first man drunk in the ship. After dinner that day, he had heightened his testing powers with an unusual, even to him, share of claret.

Well, at the usual time, we beat to quarters; that is always done just before the hammocks are piped down; and it is then that the sobriety of the crew, as they stand to their guns, is narrowly looked into by the respective officers; for then the grog has been served out for the day, and it is supposed to have been all consumed. The captain, of course, came on the quarter-deck to quarters, making tack and half tack, till he fairly threw out his starboard grappling iron, and moored himself to one of the belaying-pins round the mizen-mast.

"Mister Farmer," said he to the first luff, "you see I know how to keep a ship in discipline—not (hiccup) a man drunk on board of her."

"I doubt it, sir," was the respectful answer. "I think, sir, I can see one now," said he, taking his eyes off his superior, after a searching glance, and looking carelessly around.

"Where is he?"

"Oh, sir, we must not forget that it is Christmas-day: so, if you please, sir, we will not scrutinize very particularly."

"But we will *scru*—scrutinize very particularly: remember me of *scru*—scrutinize, Mister Rattlin—a good word that *scru*—screws—trenails—tenpenny nails—hammers—iron-clamps, and dog-fastenings—what were we talking about, Mr. Farmer? Oh; sobriety! we will—assuredly (hiccup) find out the drunken man."

So, with a large *cortege* of officers, the master-at-arms, and the ship's corporals, Captain Reud leaning his right arm heavily upon my left shoulder—for he was cunning enough, just then, to find that the gout was getting into his foot—we proceeded round the ship on our voyage of discovery. Now, it is no joke for a man half drunk to be tried for drunkenness by one wholly so. It was a curious and a comic sight, that examination—for many of the examined were conscious of a cup too much. These invariably endeavoured to look the most sober. As we approached the various groups around each gun, the different artifices of the men to pass muster were most amusing. Some drew themselves stiffly up, and looked as rigid as iron-stanchions; others took the examination with an easy, *debonnair* air, as if to say, "Who so innocent as I?" Some again, not exactly liking the judge, quietly dodged round, shifting places with their shipmates, so that when the captain peered into the eyes of the last for the symptoms of ebriety, the mercurial rascals had quietly placed themselves first.

To the sharp, startling accusation, "You are drunk, sir," the answers were beautifully various. The indignant "No, sir!"—the well-acted surprise, "I, sir?"—the conciliatory "God bless your honour, no sir!"—the logical "Bill Bowling was cook to day, sir,"—and the sarcastic, "No more than your honour's honour," to witness, were, as we small wits say, better than a play.

The search was almost unavailing. The only fish that came to the net was a poor idiotic young man, that, to my certain knowledge, had not tasted grog for months; for his messmates gave him a hiding whenever he asked for his allowance. To the sudden "You're drunk, sir," of Captain Reud, the simple youth, taken by surprise, and perhaps thinking it against the articles of war to contradict the captain, said, "Yes, sir; but I haven't tasted grog since——"

"You got drunk, sir; take him aft, master-at-arms, and put him in irons."

The scrutiny over, our temperate captain went aft himself, glorifying that, in all the ship's company there was only one instance of intoxication on Christmas-day; and thus he delivered himself, hiccuping, on the gratifying occasion—

"I call that discipline, Mr. Farmer. The only drunken man in his Majesty's vessel under my command, aft on the poop in irons, and that fellow not worth his salt."

"I quite agree with you," said the sneering purser, "that the only fellow who has dared to get disgracefully drunk to-day is not worth his salt, but he is not in irons, aft on the poop."

"I am sure he is not," said the first lieutenant.

"That is as—astonishing," said the mystified extirpator of intemperance, as he staggered into his cabin, to console himself for, and to close his labours with, the two other bottles.

The reader will perceive, from these incidents, that it was time that Captain Reud retired to enjoy his laurels on his *solum natale*, in *otium cum* as much *dignitate* as would conduce to the happiness of one of his mischief-loving temperament. The admiral on the station thought so too, when Reud took the ship into Port Royal. He superseded the black pilot, and took upon himself to con the ship; the consequence was, that she hugged the point so closely, that she went right upon the church steeple of old Port Royal, which is very quietly lying beside the new one, submerged by an earthquake, and a hole was knocked in the ship's forefoot, of that large and ruinous description, which may be aptly compared to the hole in a patriot's reputation, who has lately taken office with his quondam opponents. With all the efforts of all the fleet, who sent relays of hands on board of us to work the pumps, we could not keep her afloat; so we were obliged, first putting a thrummed sail under her bottom, to tow her alongside of the dock-yard wharf, lighten her, and lash her to it.

The same evening, by nine o'clock, she had an empty hull, and all the ship's company and officers were located in the dock-yard, and preparations were made, the next day, for heaving the frigate down. It was the opinion of every body that, had not our skipper been the nephew of the very high official of the Admiralty, he would have been tried by a court-martial, for thus attempting to overturn submarine churches, and cracking the bottom of his majesty's beautiful frigate. As it was, we were only ordered to be repaired with all haste, and to go home, very much indeed to the satisfaction of every body but the captain himself.

As I never intended this to be a mere journal of my life, I have omitted a multiplicity of occurrences, highly interesting in themselves, but which, if they were related, would swell the work to a small library; as they were not immediately personal to myself, I have omitted even to enumerate them.

CHAPTER XIII.

*A fever case, and a potion of love, if not altogether a love-potion—
What are the doctors about when men die despite of their
knowledge, and are cured without it? Ralph knoweth not.*

HOWEVER, I must retrograde. It may seem surprising that I have made so little mention of my messmates, for it would seem that, to a midshipman, the affairs and characters of midshipmen would be paramount. To me they were not so, for reasons that I have before stated. Besides, our berth was like an eastern caravansary, or the receiving-room of a pest-house. They all died, were promoted, or went into other ships, excepting two, and myself, who returned to England. It must not be supposed that we were without young gentlemen; sometimes we had our full complement, sometimes half. Fresh ones came, and they died, and so on. Before I had time to form friendships with them, or to study their characters, they took their long sleep beneath the palisades, or were thrown overboard in their hammocks. This was much the case with the wardroom officers. The first lieutenant, the doctor, and the purser, were the only original ones that returned to England with us. The mortality among the assistant-surgeons was dreadful; they messed with us. Indeed, I have no recollection of the names, or even the persons of the majority of those with whom I ate, and drank, and acted, they being so prone to prove this a transitory world.

We were tolerably healthy till the capture of St. Domingo: when, being obliged to convey a regiment of French soldiers to the prisons at Port Royal, they brought the fever in its worst form on board, and, notwithstanding every remedial measure that the then state of science could suggest, we never could eradicate the germs of it. The men were sent on board of a hulk, the vessel thoroughly cleansed and fumigated, and, finally, we were ordered as far north as New Providence; but all these means were ineffectual, for, at intervals, nearly regular, the fever would again appear, and men and officers die.

Hitherto I had escaped. The only attack to which I was subjected took place in the capstan-house, for so the place was called where we were bivouacked during the heaving down of the ship. I record it, not that my conduct under the

disease may be imitated, but on account of the singularity of the access, and the rapidity of the cure.

I had to tow, from Port Royal up to Kingston, a powder-hoy, and through some misconduct of the coxswain, the boat's awning had been left behind. Six or seven hours under a sun, vertical at noon, through the hotter part of the day, and among the swamps and morasses, so luxuriant in vegetable productions, that separate Port Royal from Kingston, is a good ordeal by which to try a European constitution. For the first time, my stamina seemed inclined to succumb before it.

When I returned to Port Royal at about four in the afternoon, the first peculiar sensation with which I was attacked was a sort of slipping of the ground from under me as I trod, and a notion that I could skim along the surface of the earth if I chose, without using my legs. Then I was not, as is most natural to a fasting midshipman, excessively hungry, but excessively jocular. So, instead of seeking good things to put into my mouth, I went about dispensing them from out of it. I soon began to be sensible that I was talking much nonsense, and to like it. At length, the little sense that I had still left was good enough to suggest to me that I might be distinguished by my first interview with that king of terrors, Saffron-crowned Jack. "Shall I go to the doctor?" said I. "No—I have the greatest opinion of Doctor Thompson—but it is a great pity that he cannot cure the yellow fever. No doubt he'll be offended, and we are the greatest of friends. But, I have always observed, that all those who go to the doctor begin going indeed—for, from the doctor, they invariably go to their hammocks—from their hammocks to the hospital—and from the hospital to the palisades." So, while there was yet time, I decided to go in quite an opposite direction. I went out of the dock-yard gates, and to a nice, matronly, free mulatto, who was a mother to me—and something more. She was a woman of some property, and had a very strong gang of young negroes, that she used to hire out to his Majesty, to work in his Majesty's dock-yard, and permit, for certain considerations, to caulk the sides and bottoms of his Majesty's vessels of war.

Notwithstanding the intimate connexion between his Majesty and herself, she did not disdain to wash, or cause to be washed, the shirts and stockings of his Majesty's officers of the navy: that is, if she liked those officers. Now, she was kind enough to like me exceedingly; and, though very pretty, and not yet very old, all in a very proper and platonic manner. She was also a great giver of dignity balls, and, when

she was full dressed, Miss Belinda Bellarosa was altogether a very seductive personage. A warrant officer was her abomination. She had refused the hands of many master's mates, and I knew, "for true," to use her own bewitching idiom, that several lieutenants had made her the most honourable overtures.

Well, to Miss Belinda I made the best of my way. I am choice in my phrases. I could hardly make my way at all, for a strange sort of delirium was supervening. Immediately she saw me, she exclaimed, "Ah, Goramity! him caught for sure—it break my heart to see him. You know I lub Massa Rattlin, like my own piccaninny. S'elp me God, he very bad!"

"My queen of countless Indians! dear duchess of doubloons! marry me to-night, and then you'll be a jolly widow to-morrow!"

"Hear him! him! how talk of marry me?"

"Oh! Bella dear, if you will not kill me with kindness, what shall I do? I cannot bear this raging pain in my head. You've been a kind soul to me. Pardon my nonsense, I could not help it. Let one of your servants help me to walk to the doctor."

"Nebber, nebber, doctor!" and she spat upon the floor with a sovereign contempt. "Ah, Massa Ralph, me lub you dearly—you sleep here to-night—me lose my reputation—nebber mind you dat. What for you no run, Dorcas, a get me, from Massa Jackson's store, bottle good port? Tell him for me, Miss Bellarosa. You Phoebe, you oder woman of colour dere, why you no take Massa Ralph, and put him in best bed? Him bad, for certainly—make haste, or poor Buckra-boy die."

So, with the assistance of my two dingy hand-maidens, I was popped into bed, and, according to the directions of my kind hostess, a suffocating number of blankets heaped upon me. Shortly afterwards, and when my reeling senses were barely sane enough to enable me to recognise objects, my dear doctress, with two more negresses, to witness to her reputation, entered, and putting the bottle of port, with a white powder floating at the top of it, into a china bowl, compelled me to drink off the whole of it. Then, with a look of great and truly motherly affection, she took her leave of me, telling the two nurses to put another blanket on me, and to hold me down in the bed if I attempted to get out.

Then began the raging agony of fever. I felt as one mass of sentient fire. I had a foretaste of that state which I hope we shall all escape, save one, of ever burning and never con-

suming; but, though moments of such suffering tell upon the wretch with the duration of ages, this did not last more than half an hour, when they became exchanged for a dream, the most singular, and that will never be forgotten whilst memory can offer me one single idea.

Methought that I was suddenly whisked out of bed, and placed in the centre of an interminable plain of sand. It bounded the horizon like a level sea: nothing was to be seen but this white and glowing sand, the intense blue and cloudless sky, and, directly above me, the eternal sun, like the eye of an angry God, pouring down intolerable fires upon my unprotected head. At length, my skull opened, and, from the interior of my head, a splendid temple seemed to arise. Rows of columns supported rows of columns, order was piled upon order, and, as it rose, Babel-like, to the skies, it extended in width as it increased in height; and there, in this strange edifice, I saw the lofty, the winding, the interminable staircase, the wide and marble-paved courts; nor was there wanting the majestic and splashing fountain, whose cool waters were mocking my scorched-up lips; and there were also the long range of beautiful statues. The structure continued multiplying itself until all the heavens were full of it, extending nearly to the horizon all around.

Under this superincumbent weight I long struggled to stand. It kept bearing down more and more heavily upon the root of my brain: the anguish became insufferable, but I still nobly essayed to keep my footing, with a defiance and a pride that savoured of impious presumption. At length, I felt completely overcome, and exclaimed, "God of mercy, relieve me! the burden is more than I can bear." Then commenced the havoc in this temple, that was my head, and was not; there were the toppling down of the vast columns, the crashing of the severed architraves, the grinding together of the rich entablatures; the breaking up, with noise louder than ever thunder was heard by man, of the marble pavements, the ruins crushed together in one awful confusion above me;—nature could do no more, and my dream slept.

The sun was at its meridian height when I awoke the next day in health, with every sensation renewed, and that, too, in the so sweet a feeling that makes the mere act of living delightful. I found nothing remarkable, but that I had been subjected to a profuse perspiration.

Miss Bellarosa met me at breakfast all triumph, and I was all gratitude. I was very hungry, and as playful as a school-boy who had just procured a holiday.

"Eh! Massa Ralph, suppose no marry me to-day—what fer you no say yes to dat?"

"Because, dear Bella, you wouldn't have me."

"Try—you ask me," said she, looking at me with a fondness not quite so maternal as I could wish.

"Bella, dearest, will you marry me?"

"For true?"

"For true."

"Tanky, Massa Rattlin, dear, tanky; you make me very happy; but, for true, no. Were you older more fifteen year, or me more fifteen year younger, perhaps—but tank ye much fer de complement. Now, go, and tell buckra doctor."

So, as I could not reward my kind physician with my hand, which, by-the-by, I should not have offered had I not been certain of refusal, I was obliged to force upon her as splendid a trinket as I could purchase for a keepsake, and gave my sable nurses a handful of bits each. Bits of what? say the uninitiated.

I don't know whether I have described this fever case very nosologically, but, very truly I know I have.

CHAPTER XIV.

A new character introduced, who claimeth old acquaintanceship—Not very honest by his own account, which giveth him more the appearance of honesty than he deserveth—He proveth to be a steward, not inclined to hide his talent in a napkin.

DURING all the time that these West Indian events had been occurring, that is, nearly three years, I had no other communication with England than regularly and repeatedly sending there various pieces of paper, thus headed, "This, my first of exchange, my second and third not paid;" or, for variety's sake, "This, my second of exchange, my first and third," &c. ; or, to be more various still, "This, my third, my first and second,"—all of which received more attention than their strange phraseology seemed to entitle them to.

But I must now introduce a new character; one that attended me for years, like an evil shadow, nor left me until the "beginning of the end."

The ship had been hove down, the wound in her forefoot healed, that is to say, the huge rent stopped up; and we were beginning to get water and stores on board, and I was walking on the quay of the dock-yard, when I was civilly accosted by a man having the appearance of a captain's steward. He was pale and handsome, with small white hands: and, if not actually genteel in his deportment, had that metropolitan refinement of look that indicated contact with genteel society. Though dressed in the blue jacket and white duck trousers of the sailor's Sunday best, at a glance, you would pronounce him to be no seaman. Before he spoke to me, he had looked attentively at several other midshipmen, some belonging to my own ship, others, young gentlemen who were on shore on dock-yard duty. At length, after a scrutiny sufficient to make me rather angry, he took off his hat very respectfully, and said—

"Have I the honour of speaking to Mr. Ralph Ratlin?"

"You have: well, my man?"

"Ah, sir, you forget me, and no wonder. My name, sir, is Dauntton—Joshua Dauntton."

"Never heard the name before in my life."

"Oh, yes, you have, sir, begging your pardon, very often indeed. Why, you used to call me Jossey; little Jossey,

come here, you little vagabond, and let me ride you pick-a-back."

"The devil I did!"

"Why, Mr. Rattlin, I was your fag at Mr. Roots' school."

Now, I knew this to be a lie; for, under that very respectable pedagogue, and in that very respectable seminary, as the reader well knows, I was the *fagged*, and not the *fagger*.

"Now, really, Joshua Dauntton," said I, "I am inclined to think that you may be Joshua the little vagabond still; for, upon my honour, I remember nothing about you. Seeing there were so many hundred boys under Mr. Roots, my schoolfellow you might have been; but may I be vexed if ever I fagged you or any one else! Now, my good man, prove to me that you have been my schoolfellow first, and then let me know what I can do for you afterwards, for I suppose that you have some favour to ask, or some motive in seeking me."

"I have, indeed," he replied, with a peculiar intonation of voice, that might have been construed in many ways. He then proceeded to give me many details of the school at Islington, which convinced me, if there he had never been, he had conversed with some one who had. Still, he evaded all my attempts at cross-examination, with a skill which gave me a much higher opinion of his intellect than of his honesty. With the utmost efforts of my recollection, I could not recall him to mind, and I bluntly told him so. I then bade him tell me who he was, and what he wanted.

"I am the only son of an honest pawnbroker of Shoreditch. He was tolerably rich, and determined to give me a good education. He sent me to Mr. Roots' school. It was there that I had the happiness of being honoured by your friendship. Now, sir, you perceive that, though I am not so tall as you by some inches, I am at least seven or eight years older. Shortly after you left school, to go to another at Stickenham, I also left, with my education, as my father fondly supposed, finished. Sir, I turned out bad. I confess it with shame—I was a rascal. My father turned me out of doors. I have had several ups and downs in the world since, and I am now steward on board of the London, the West Indiaman that arrived here the day before yesterday."

"Very well, Joshua: but how came you to know that I went to school at Stickenham?"

"Because, in my tramping about the country, I saw you, with the other young gentlemen, in the play-ground on the common."

"Hum! but how, in the name of all that is curious, came you to know that I was here at Port Royal dock-yard, and a young gentleman belonging to the Eos?"

"Oh! very naturally, sir. About two years ago, I passed again over the same common with my associates. I could not resist the wish to see if you were still in the play-ground. I did not see you among the rest, and I made bold to inquire of one of the elder boys where you were. He told me the name of the ship and of your captain. The first thing on coming into the harbour that struck my eye, was your very frigate alongside the dock-yard. I got leave to come on shore, and I knew you directly that I saw you."

"But why examine so many before you spoke to me? However, I have no reason to be suspicious, for time makes great changes. Now, what shall I do for you?"

"Give me your protection, and as much of your friendliness as is compatible with our different stations."

"But, Daunton, according to your own words, you have been a sad fellow. Before I extend to you what you require, I ought to know what you really have done. You spoke of tramping—have you been a trumper—a gipsy?"

"I have."

"Have you ever committed theft?"

"Only in a small way."

"Ah! and swindled—only in a small way, of course?"

"The temptations were great."

"Where will this fellow stop?" thought I: "let us see, however, how far he will go;" and then, giving utterance to my thoughts, I continued, "The step between swindling and forgery is but very short," and I paused—for even I had not the confidence to ask him, "are you a forger?"

"Very," was the short, dry answer. I was astonished. Perhaps he will confess to the commission of murder.

"Oh! as you were just saying to yourself, we are the mere passive tools of fate—we are drawn on, in spite of ourselves. If a man comes in our way, why, you know, is self-defence—hey?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"A little prick under the ribs in a quiet way. The wanderings and jerkings of the angry hand will happen. You understand me?"

"Too well, I am afraid, sir. I have never yet shed man's blood—I never will. Perhaps, sir, you would not depend upon my virtue for this—you may upon my cowardice. I tremble—I sicken—at the sight of blood. I have endeavoured

to win your confidence by candour—I have not succeeded. May I be permitted to bid you a good day?"

"Stop, Dauntton, this is a singular encounter, and a still more singular conference. As an old schoolfellow, you ask me to give you my protection. The protection of a reefer is, in itself, something laughable: and then, as an inducement, you confess to me that you are a villain, only just in guilt short of murder. Perhaps, by this bravado sort of confession, you have endeavoured to give me a worse impression of your character than it really deserves, that you might give me the better opinion of your sincerity. Is it not so?"

"In a great measure, it is."

"I thought so. Now, let me tell you, Dauntton, that that very circumstance makes me afraid of you. But, still, I will not cast aside the appeal of an old schoolfellow. What can I do for you?"

"Give me the protection afforded me by a man-of-war, by taking me as your servant."

"Utterly impossible! I can press you directly, or give the hint to any of the many men-of-war here to do so. But the rules of the service do not permit a midshipman to have a separate servant. Do you wish to enter?"

"Only on board of your ship, and with the privilege of waiting upon you, and being constantly near your person."

"Thank you; but what prevents my impressing you, even as you stand there?"

"These very ample protections." And he produced them.

"Yes! I see that you are well provided. But why give up your good berth on board the London?"

"Mr. Ratlin, I have my reasons. Permit them, as yet, to remain secret. There is no guilt attached to them. May I sail with you in the capacity of your servant?"

"I have told you before, that you cannot be my servant solely. You must be the servant of the midshipmen's berth."

"Yes, with all my heart, provided you pledge me your honour that I shall never be put to any other duty."

I was astonished at this perseverance, and very honestly told him all the miseries of the situation for which he seemed so ambitious. They did not shake his resolution. I then left him, and spoke to Mr. Farmer. "Let the fool enter," was the laconic reply.

"But he will not enter but on the conditions I have mentioned, and his protections are too good to be violated."

"Then I authorize you to make them. We are short of men."

But Joshua would not enter : he required to be pressed ; so I went on board his own merchant ship, according to previous arrangement, and pressed him. He made no resistance, and produced no documents : he only called the master of the ship and the first and second officer to witness that he was a pressed man, and then, taking his kit with him, he even cheerfully tripped down the side into the boat ; and thus, for nearly an eventful year, I was the instrument of placing my evil genius near me.

CHAPTER XV.

The Art of Mischief made easy—rather hard upon the experimented—"Heaven preserve me from my friends! I'll take care of my enemies myself;" say the honest Spaniards, and so says honest Ralph.

AND so, filling our cabins with invalided officers, we sailed for England. We took home with us a convoy: and a miserable voyage we made of it. I had none of those exhilarating feelings so usual to every one who is about, after a long period of absence, to revisit his native land. I grew dull and irritable, a mixture of qualities as unpleasant as they are contradictory. I began to cast up accounts with that stern old reckoner, Time, and I found the balance dreadfully in my disfavour. What had I, in exchange, for the loss of the three most sunshiny years of life, comprised between the ages of sixteen and nineteen? To look back upon that period, it seemed a dreary waste, with only one small bright spot blooming upon it. Indeed, the contemplation of that oasis was so dazzling, that, when my mental eye was no longer riveted upon it, like a gaze upon the sun, it made all else seem dark and indistinct.

The indomitable pride natural to every bosom, and perhaps too plentiful in mine, had also its share in filling my mind with an unceasing and cankering disgust. I began to feel the bitterness of being unowned. What was country to me? The chain that binds a man to it is formed of innumerable small, yet precious, links, almost all of which were wanting in my case. Father, mother, family, a heritage, a holding, something to claim as one's own—these are what bind a man's affections to a particular spot of earth, and these were not mine: the fact was, I wanted, just at that time, excitement of good or of evil, and I was soon supplied with that aliment of life, *ad nauseam*.

In taking my *soi-disant* schoolfellow on board the Eos, I had shipped with me my Mephistophiles. The former servant to the midshipmen's berth was promoted to the mizen-top, and Joshua Dauntton inducted, with due solemnities, to all the honours of waiting upon about half a dozen fierce, unruly midshipmen, and as many sick supernumeraries; and he formally took charge of all the mess-plate and munitions *de bouche* of this submarine establishment. There was no temp-

tation to embezzlement. Our little society was a commonwealth of the most democratic description—and, as usually happens in these sort of experiments, there was a community of goods that were good for nothing to the community.

I will give an inventory of all the moveables of this republic, for the edification of the curious. Among these, it being continually in motion, I must first of all enumerate the *salle a manger* itself, a hot, little hole in the cock-pit, of about eight feet by six, which was never clean. This dining-parlour and breakfast-room also contained our cellars, which contained nothing, and on which cellars we lay down when there was room—your true midshipman is a recumbent animal—and sat when he could not lie. For the same reason that the Romans called a grove *lucus*, these cellarets were called lockers, because there was nothing to lock in them, and no locks to lock in that nothing withal. In the midst stood an oak table, carved with more names than ever Rosalind accused Orlando of spoiling good trees with, besides the outline of a ship, and a number of squares, which served for an immoveable draught board. One battered, spoutless, handleless, japanned-tin jug, that did not contain water, for it leaked; some tin mugs; seven, or perhaps eight, pewter plates; an excellent old iron tureen, the best friend we had, and which had stood by us, through storm and calm, and the spiteful kick of Reefer, and the contemptuous “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” in the galley, which contained our cocoa in the morning, our pea-soup at noon, and, after these multiplied duties, performed the character of wash-hand basin, whenever the midshipman’s fag condescended to cleanse his hands. It is a fact that, when we sailed for England, of crockeryware we had not a single article. There was a calabash or so, and two or three sections of cocoa-nut shells.

We had no other provisions than barely the ship’s allowance, and even these were of the worst description. Bread, it is well remarked, is the staff of life; but it is not quite pleasant to find it life itself, and to have the power of locomotion. Every other description of food was in the same state of transition into vivification. There is no exaggeration in all this. From the continual coming and going, and the state of constant disunion in which we lived, it was every man for himself, and God, I am sorry to say, seemed to have very little to do with any of us. So complete was our disorganization, and so great our destitution as a mess, that, after the first week, the supernumerary sick young gentlemen were relieved from this candle-light den of starvation and of dirt, and distributed among the warrant officers.

It was to wait upon our persons, to administer to our wants, and to take care of our culinary comforts, that Joshua Dauntton was duly installed. It was very ludicrous to see our late servant giving up his charge to our present one—the solemnity with which the iron tureen, and the one knife, and the three forks, that were not furcated, seeing that they had but one prong each, were surrendered! Joshua's contempt at the sordid poverty of the republic to which he was to administer was quite as undisguised as his surprise. I again and again requested him to do his duty in some capacity in the ship, but he steadily refused.

The silky, soft-spoken, cockney-dialected Josh got me into continual hot water. At first he seemed to consider himself as my servant only; consequently, he was continually thrashed, and I, on his appeal, taking his part, had to endeavour to thrash the thrasher. Now, this could not always conveniently be done. The more I suffered for this Dauntton, the more ardently he seemed to attach himself to me. But there appeared to be much more malice than affection in this fidelity. Nothing prospered either with me or my messmates. He contrived, in the most plausible manner possible, to spoil our almost unspoilable meals. He always managed to draw for us the very worst rations, and to lay the blame on the purser's steward. In bringing aft our miserable dinners his foot would slip, or a man would run against him—or somebody had taken it off the galley-fire, and thrown it in the manger. Salt water would miraculously intrude into my messmates' rum-bottle, and my daily pint of wine was either sour, or muddy, or sandy, or afflicted with something that made it undrinkable. In one word, under the care of the good Joshua, Messieurs the midshipmen ran a most imminent risk of being actually starved.

Many a time, after we had gone through the motions of dining, without eating, and as we ate in our dark, hot hole, over our undrinkable potations and our inedible eatables, each of us resting his hungry head upon his aching elbows, watching the progress of some animated piece of biscuit, would Master Dauntton, the slave of our lamp, which, by-the-by, was a bottle bearing a miserably consumptive purser's dip, beside which a farthing rushlight would look quite aldermanic—I say, this slave of our lamp would perch himself down on the combings of the cable-tier hatchway, in the midst of the flood of Heaven's blessed daylight, that came pouring from aloft into this abyss, and very deliberately take out his private store of viands, and there insultingly wag his jaws, with the most complacent satisfaction, in the faces of his masters. The

contrast was too bad—the malice of it too tormenting. Whilst he was masticating his beautifully white American crackers, and smacking his lips over his savoury German sausage, we were grumbling over putrid bones and weavilly biscuit, that we could not swallow, and yet hunger would not permit us to desert. It was a floating repetition of the horrors of Tantalus.

Well, to myself, this rascal was most submissive—most eager in forcing upon me his services. He relieved my hammock-man of his duty; but, somehow, nothing prospered to which he put his hand. The third night, the nails of the cleet that fastened my head-clews up to the deck above me, drew, and I came down by the run, head foremost; and immediately where my head ought to have alighted on the deck, was found the carpenter's pitch kettle, with the blade of an axe in the centre of it and the edge uppermost. No one knew how it came there, and, had I shot out as young gentlemen usually do on such occasions, I should, if I had not been quite decapitated, at least have died by the axe. Not being asleep when the descent took place, I grappled with my neighbour, the old fat assistant surgeon, and he with the next, and the three came down on deck with a lunge that actually started the marine officer—who, every body knows, is the best sleeper on board. Happily for myself, I fell from my hammock sideways. Next, the accommodating Joshua got the sole charge of my chest, and, though nothing was missed, in a short time, every thing was ruined. The cockroaches ate the most unaccountable holes in my best uniforme, my shoes burst in putting them on, my boots cracked all across the upper leathers, and the feet of my stockings came off when I attempted to draw them on.

The obsequious Joshua was equally assiduous with his other six masters, and even more successful; so that, in addition to being starved, there was every probability of our being reduced to nakedness. This was no pleasant prospect, running out of tropical latitudes towards England, in the month of January. In the course of six weeks, such a ragged, woe-begone, gaunt, and famished gang of reefers was never before huddled together in one of his Majesty's vessels of war. The shifts that we were obliged to have recourse to were quite amusing, to all but the shiftmakers. The only good hat, and wearable uniform coat, went round and round; it was a happy thing for this disconsolate seven that we were all nearly of a size. To aggravate our misfortunes, we could no longer get an occasional dinner, either in the captain's cabin or the ward-room, for our clothes were all in rags.

In the meanwhile, Joshua Dauntton grew more and more sleek, and pale, and fat. He throve upon our miseries. He played his part at length so well, as to avoid thrashings. He possessed, in perfection, that which, in classic cockpit, is called "the gift of the gab." He was never in the wrong. Indeed, he began to get a favourite with each of the individuals over whom he was so mercilessly tyrannizing, while each thought himself the tyrant. All this may seem improbable to well-nurtured, shore-bred, young gentlemen and ladies: but midshipmen were always reckless and idle—that is, personally. On actual service, they have ever been equally reckless, but commensurably active. This kindness of Joshua, in taking all trouble off our hands, soon left us almost nothing wherewith to trouble ourselves.

CHAPTER XVI.

An anticipated dinner—All the enjoyment spoiled by the first cut—A suit of clothes ill suited for wearing—and Joshua Dauntton trying on a pair of iron leggings—more easily put on than shaken off.

This imp, this Flibbertygibbet, was killing us by inches. At length, one of the master's mates, no longer being able to starve quietly and philosophically, as became a man of courage, was again determined, by one last effort, to dine, and breakfast, and sup, in the captain's cabin and ward-room as often as he could. So, finding that there was enough new blue cloth on board, with buttons, &c., to make him a complete suit, he purchased them, at an enormous price, *on credit*; and set the ship's tailors to work incontinently. By this time, we were, with our homeward-bound convoy, on the banks of Newfoundland. It was misty and cold—and we were chilly and ragged. In such a conjuncture of circumstances, even the well clothed may understand what a blessing a new suit of warm blue must be—that suit bearing in its suite a long line of substantial breakfasts, dinners, and suppers. All this was about to be Mr. Pigtop's, our kind messmate, and respectable mate of the orlop deck. He had already begun to protest upon the unreasonableness of rotatory coats, or of having a quarter deck pair of trowsers, like the wives of the ancient Britons, common to the sept. The ungrateful rogue! He had on, at the very time, the only quarter-deck-going coat among us, which was mine, and which he had just borrowed to enable him to go on deck, and report every thing right below.

"Captain Reud's compliments to Mr. Pigtop, and would be glad of his company to dinner."

Angelic words, when the invited reefer has a clean shirt, or collar, and a decent uniform.

"'Mr. Pigtop's compliments to Captain Reud, and will be most happy to wait on him.' There, you dogs," said the elated Pigtop, "I say, no more lending of clothes. Here, you Josh, jump forward, and tell the tailor I must have my uniform by four bells."

Josh jumped forward with a very intelligent grin upon his tallow-complexioned but handsome countenance.

Now, the captain and the ward-room officers all knew very well of the unaccountable destruction of our clothes, which,

- a they affected to believe, was not unaccountable to them. They said it arose from very natural causes; a little of which was to be ascribed to dampness, a little to the cockroaches, and a great, a very great deal to our proverbial carelessness. Well. A midshipman careless! But some people *may* libel with impunity. Whatever they thought, they enjoyed our dilemmas, both of food and of clothing.

An hour before the captain's dinner was ready, the much-envied suit was brought aft, and duly displayed on Mr. Pigtop's chest. The ward-room officers, or at least those of them with whom he could take that liberty, were invited out to view it. It was pronounced, for ship-tailoring, excellent.

Pigtop's elation was great. So was Josh Dauntton's; but all in a quiet, submissive way. Our envy was proportionate. Josh was an excellent barber, and he volunteered to shave the happy diner-out—the offer was accepted. Then came the turn of fate—then commenced the long series of the poor mate's miseries. It was no fault of Dauntton's, certainly—but all the razors were like saws. The blood came out over the black visage of Mr. Pigtop; but the hair stayed most pertinaciously on. The sufferer swore—how horribly he swore! The time was fast elapsing. After a most tremendous oath from the sufferer, which would have almost split an oak plank, Joshua said in his lowly and insinuating voice, "Mr. Pigtop, pray do—do, do, sir, try the razors yourself. My heart bleeds, sir, more than your face—do try, sir, for I think the captain's servant is now coming down the hatchway to tell you dinner is ready."

In despair, the hungry depilator seized the razors; and, being exasperated with hurry, he made a worse job of it than Joshua. Where Josh had made notches, Pigtop made gashes. The ship's barber was then sent for, and he positively refused to go over the bloody surface.

But Joshua Dauntton was the true friend, the friend in need. With Mr. Pigtop's permission, he would go and borrow one of Dr. Thompson's razors. The offer was gratefully accepted. In the meantime, dinner was actually announced. It is just about as wise to attempt to keep the hungry tiger from his newly-slaughtered prey, as for a mid to make the captain of a man-of-war wait dinner. Reud did not wait.

However, the fresh razor did its work admirably, in the adroit hand of Joshua. The hitherto intractable beard flew off rapidly, and Joshua's tongue moved more glibly even than his razor. Barbers in the act of office have, like the House of Commons, the privilege of speech. They are not amenable afterwards for what they say. In the act they are omni-

potent, for who would quarrel with a man who is slipping a razor over your carotid artery? Not certainly Mr. Pigtop. Thus spoke Joshua, amid the eloquent flourishes of his instrument:

"Mr. Pigtop, I've great respect for you—a very great respect indeed, sir. If you have not been a good friend to me yet, you will—I know it, sir; you are not like the other flighty young gentlemen. I have a respect for years, sir—a great respect for years, and honour a middle-aged gentleman. Indeed, sir, it must be a great condescension in you to permit yourself to be only a master's mate of a frigate, seeing that you are quite an elderly gentleman——"

"Da——!"

"There!—that was very imprudent indeed, sir, of you to open your mouth. It was not my fault, you know, that the brush went into it: indeed, some people like the taste of soapsuds—wholesome, I assure you—very. A stubble of your growth, sir, always requires a double lathering—don't speak. Oh, sir, you are a happy man—exceeding. Your face will be as smooth as a man's borrowing money. You, boy, just run up the after-hatchway, and tell the captain's steward that Mr. Pigtop will be in the cabin in the flourish of a razor, or before a white horse can turn gray. Permit me to take you by the nose; the true handle of the face, sir: it gives the man, as it were, a sort of a command, sir, of the whole head; he can box the compass with it. Happy indeed you are, sir, and much to be envied. There was one of the captain's turtles killed yesterday—Jumbo is a cook, a most excellent cook—a spoonful of the soup to-day will be worth a king's ransom—a peck of March dust! pooh!—I wouldn't give a spoonful of that soup for a hundred bushels of it. Take my advice, sir, and have soup twice, sir. As it was carried along the main-deck, I'm dishonest, if the young gentlemen didn't follow it with the water running down in streams from the corners of their mouths, and their tongues intreatingly lolling out like a parcel of hungry dogs in Cripple-gate, following the catsmeat-man's barrow. One more rasp over your upper lip, and you are as smooth as the new-born babe—talking of lips, as the first spoonful of that turtle-soup glides over them—the devil! I'll take God to witness, it was an accident—the roll of the ship!"

Joshua Dauntton was on his knees before Mr. Pigtop, who was in an agony of pain, holding on his upper lip, which was nearly severed from his face, whilst the blood was streaming through his fingers.

Doctor Thompson with diachylon and black sticking-plaister

ter was soon on the spot to the assistance of the almost dilapidated master's mate. After the best was done for it, the poor fellow cut but a sorry appearance; still his extreme hunger, made almost furious by the vision of the turtle-soup, so artfully conjured up by the malicious Joshua, got the better of his sense of pain; and, with a great band of black plaister reaching transversely from the right nostril to the left corner of his mouth, the grim-looking Mr. Pigtop made haste to don the new uniform.

In the meantime, the protestations and tears of Joshua had convinced every body that the horrible gash was merely the effect of accident, for the ship was rolling a great deal at the moment. What the captain and his guests were doing in the cabin above with the turtle-soup it is needless for me to state, for that same soup was never fated to gladden the wounded lip of Mr. Pigtop.

The hasty and famishing gentleman, in his very first attempt to draw on his new trowsers, to the astonishment of all his messmates, who had now gathered round him, found them separate in the middle of each of the legs. He might as well have attempted to clothe himself with cobweb continuations; they came to pieces almost with a shake. The waistcoat and coat were in the same predicament: they had not the principle of continuity in them. Every body was lost in amazement, except Mr. Pigtop, whose amazement, quite as great as our's, was lost in his still greater rage. It was extremely unfortunate for Joshua Dauntton that he had cut the lip that day. The kind doctor was still by during the appraising, or the attempt at it. He examined the rotten clothes, and he soon discovered that they had been saturated in different parts by some corrosive liquid, that instead of impairing, really improved the brilliancy of the cloth.

During these proceedings, Captain Rend and his guests had eaten up the dinner; but the captain, not being pleased to be pleasantly humoured that day, sent word for Mr. Pigtop to go to the mast-head till midnight, for disrespect in not attending to the invitation that he had accepted. There was no appeal, and aloft went the wounded, ragged, famished hopper of devouring turtle-soup. Joshua looked very demure and very unhappy; but Dr. Thompson set on foot an inquiry, and the truth of the destruction of the clothes was soon ascertained. The lob-lolly boy, that is, the young man who had charge of the laboratory, where all the medicines were kept, confessed, after a little hesitation, that for certain glasses of grog he had given this pernicious liquid to Dauntton. So, while one of his masters was contemplating the stars from

the mast-head, the destroyer of reefers' kits had nothing else to do but to contemplate the beauty of his own feet, placed, with a judicious exactitude, in a very handsome pair of Bilboes under the half deck.

CHAPTER XVII.

*The cat-of-nine-tails begets a tale the most annoying to Ralph—
The story of the three crows beaten hollow—Seven's the main
and a losing cast—I promised treatise on ornithology put an end
to rather abruptly by the biplumal resolving themselves into
the mere bipedal.*

WHEN fully secured, the poor wretch sent for me. He was in a paroxysm of fear: he protested his innocence over and over again: he declared that he should die under the first lash: that it was for love of me only that he had come on board of a man-of-war; he conjured me by the fellowship of our boyish days, by all that I loved and that was sacred to us, to save him from the gangway. The easiness of my nature was worked upon, and I promised to use my influence to procure for him a pardon. I went to Mr. Farmer, but all my efforts were unavailing. The culprit passed a sleepless night in the intolerable agony of fear. Before he was brought up to be flogged, Mr. Pigtop had been fully avenged.

The gratings are rigged, the hands are turned up, and Joshua Daunton is supported by two ship's corporals, in a nearly fainting state, and stripped by another—he is too much paralyzed to do it himself. The officers are mustered on the break of the quarter-deck, and the marines are drawn up, under arms, on the gangway. Captain Reud looks fierce and forbidding, and Mr. Farmer, for his generally impassible features, really quite savage. I come forward shudderingly and look down. The wandering and restless eyes of the frightened young man meet, in an instant, what, most probably, they are seeking—my own.

"Ralph Rattlin, speak for me to the captain." The words were in themselves simple, but they were uttered in a tone of the most touching pathos. They made me start: I thought that I knew the voice, not as the voice of Joshua Daunton, the mischievous imp that had tormented us all so scientifically, but of some dear and long-forgotten friend. "Ralph Rattlin, speak for me to the captain—this must not be."

"But it shall be, by G—!" said the irascible Creole.

"Captain Reud," said I, "let me intreat you for this once only—"

"Boatswain's mate—"

"Oh, Captain Reud, if you knew what a strange sympathy—"

"The thief's cat."

"Indeed, sir, since he has been on board he has never stolen—"

"Mr. Rattlin, another word, and the mast-head. Stand back, Stebbings!—let Douglass give him the first dozen."

Now, this Douglass was a huge raw-boned boatswain's mate, that flogged left-handed, and had also a peculiar jerk in his manner of laying on the cat-o'-nine-tails, that always brought away with it little knobs of flesh wherever the knots fell, and so neatly, that blood would, at every blow, spout from the wounds as from the puncture of a lancet. Besides, the torture was also doubled by first scoring over the back in one direction, and the right-handed floggers, coming after in another, they cut out the skin in lozenges.

I looked in the captain's face, and there was no mercy; I looked below, and there appeared almost as little life. After the left-handed Scotchman had bared his brawny arm and measured his distance, and just as he was about to uplift it and strike, Dauntton murmured out, "Ralph Rattlin, I knew your father! beware, or your own blood will be dishonoured in me!"

"That voice!—they shall flog you through me!" I exclaimed, and was about to leap into the waist and cover him with my arms, when I was forcibly withheld by the officers around me, whilst the captain roared out, "He shall have another dozen for his impudent falsehood—boatswain's mate, do your duty."

The terrific lash, like angry scorpions, fell upon the white and quivering flesh, and the blood spurted out freely. It was a vengeful stroke, and loud, and long, and shrill, was the scream that followed it. But, ere the second stroke fell, the head of the tortured one suddenly collapsed upon the right shoulder, and a livid hue spread rapidly over the face and breast.

"He is dead!" said those around, in a half-hushed tone.

The surgeon felt his pulse, and placed the hand upon his breast to seek for the beating of the heart, and, shaking his head, requested him to be cast loose. He was immediately taken to the sick bay, but, with all the skill of the doctor, his resuscitation was, at first, despaired of, and only brought

about, at length, with great difficulty. The fact was, not that he had been flogged, but very nearly frightened, to death.

And I was utterly miserable. The words, that Daunton had spoken at the gangway, and the strange interest that I had taken in his behalf, gave rise to suspicions that I felt to be degrading. He had declared himself to be of my blood; the officers and crew construed the expression as meaning my brother. I was now, for the first time, look coldly upon: I felt myself avoided. Such conduct is chilling—too often fatal to the young and the proud heart: it will rise indignant at an insult, but guarded and polite contumely, and long and civil neglect, wither it. I was fast sinking into an habitual despondency. This confounded Joshua had previously completely ruined my outward man: the inward man was in great danger from his conduct, perhaps his machinations. I was shunned with a studied contempt; the more particularly as my messmates were the subjects of the constant jibes of the captain and the other officers, which messmates were of a unanimous opinion that Master Joshua ought to have been hung, inasmuch as it was now apparent that their ruined apparel was all derivable from his malice and his "Practice of Chemistry made easy." They all panted with impatience for his convalescence, in order that they might see Mr. Rattlin's *elder brother* receive the remainder of his six dozen.

I verily believe that, as I approached my native shores, I should have fallen into a settled depression of spirits, which would have terminated in melancholy madness, had I not been roused to exert my moral energies and awaken my half entombed pride by a stinging and a very wholesome insult.

As soon as we were ordered home, Captain Reud's mental aberrations became less frequent, but, when they supervened, they were more extravagant in their nature. He grew aguish, fretful, and cruel. Though he never spoke to me harshly, he addressed me more rarely. I had not dined with him for a long while: he had taken the mysterious destruction of my wardrobe as a valid excuse; and had gone so far, on one occasion, in a very delicate manner, as to present me with a complete change of linen, which perished like the rest, under the provident care of Joshua. But, after the claim of relationship by that very timid personage, there was no consideration in Reud's look; and, whenever he did speak to me, there was a contemptuous harshness in his tone that would have very much wounded my feelings at any other time. But, just then, I took but little notice of and interest in any thing.

When I say that we were reduced to rags in our habiliments, the reader is not to take the words *au pied de lettre*. By taking up slops from the purser, and by aid of the ship's tailor, we had been enabled to walk the quarter-deck without actual holes in our dress; but, the dresses themselves were grotesque, for the imitation of our spruce uniform was villainous, and our hats were deplorable: they were greased with oil, and broken, and sewed, and formless, or rather multi-form: bad as were our fittings out, we had not enough of them.

One morning, as we were, with our convoy, approaching the chops of the channel, we fell in with a frigate, one of his majesty's cruisers. I was walking sulkily up and down the gangway, that is that portion of the deck that divides the quarter-deck from the fore-castle. Captain Reud was on deck with most of his officers, all very anxious to hear news of England, and get the sight of an English newspaper. The ships ranged up within hail of each other; and, after the usual queries, and three or four newspapers, made heavy with musket-balls, had been thrown on board, the following dialogue between the two frigates took place in the persons of their respective captains, Reud saying:

"I wish you'd lower your gig, and come on board and lunch."

"If you command it, of course."

"Oh, no, no!—I am not going to hoist the commodore's broad pennant, but I really wish you'd come. We can jog on under easy sail."

"Why, really, Captain Reud, the sea is rather high—and don't you see the Mother Carey's chicken astern of you?"

By a particular hitch of his gait, and a peculiar twisting up of his nose, I perceived the fit of mischief or insanity was coming on poor Reud. *The frayed cord had been struck.* He grinned, he fenced with his speaking trumpet, he shoved the mouth of it in the first lieutenant's ribs, begged his pardon with a very gentlemanly air, and then, giving it a whirling flourish, that met and fetched blood from the tip of the marine officer's nose, he placed it in his mouth, and continued—

"Talking about Mother Carey's chickens, Captain Reeves, I think I'll tempt you on board. I have got seven of the most curious ornithological specimens in my ship that a naturalist ever beheld."

"Have you, indeed?" said Captain Reeves, who fancied himself a great naturalist. "Pipe the gigs away—be with you in a moment, Captain Reud. Pray, may I inquire of what genus?"

"The genus *Corvus*," said Reud, jumping down from the

hammock nettings. "Send for all the young gentlemen, just as they are, into my cabin :—bring them up immediately—the mate of the lower deck also—there's Mr. Rattlin on the gangway."

Obedience always treads upon the heels of command on board of a man-of-war. Long before Captain Reeves was alongside, our gang of seven miserably-looking famished reefers was ranged up side by side in the fore-cabin, whilst the steward and servants were heaping the table with all the appurtenances of a glorious luncheon.

"What does the captain want with us?" said one.

"Ask us to lunch."

"Pooh!—how could you, Pigtop, come up such a figure?"

"Come, Staines, let the kettle keep a clean tongue in its mouth, and not call ———."

"I'll tell you what it is," said another, "the captain is going to change the whole batch of us as a bad bargain. I want to get to England—I won't go."

"Nor I."

"Yes," said I, "my loving friends, as sure as we stand here, a ragged regiment of reefers, that the swabwasher's assistant would be ashamed to march through the Point or Common Hard with, he is going to introduce us and all our perfections to Captain Reeves."

"If I thought so, I'd bolt."

"Bolt," said Pigtop; "I should like to bolt that fowl."

"No sooner said than done," said another, advancing to the tempting delicacy. The steward and servants had left the cabin, having completed their arrangements.

"Stop—let us have no pilfering. This is one of Reud's pranks—I *think* that I was invited to lunch with the captain. Mr. Pigtop, will you take the chair?—that is to say, if you think that you were invited, also—you know it is a matter of conscience."

"I *think* I was."

"I am sure of it."

"Well, we have no time to lose—to your chairs, gentlemen. Heavens! they are—that is to say, the rest of the guests—are coming. Permit me to propose, in his absence, the health of our gallant commander, with three times three—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!"

Captains Reud, Reeves, and our first lieutenant, entered at the moment that we were all standing with inverted glasses. The positions of the three gentlemen as they entered were quite theatrical. Mr. Farmer had smothered his laughter by clapping his hand over his mouth; Captain Reeves looked

very droll and very much puzzled; Captain Reud, our own inestimable commander, looked really frightful. The impudence was utterly beyond his comprehension. His wild looks so much alarmed my messmates, that they slunk away like a parcel of cravens from the table: as for myself, just then, I neither feared nor cared for anything. The explosion took place thus, a rather hard substitution for "Gentlemen, for the honour that you have done me in my absence—"

"You, Rattlin"—Mr. Rattlin over the glass he had just emptied, bowed, standing in his place—"you rascals!—how dare—dare you to steal my wine?"

"Sir, I stand here as your guest—waiting to be requested to be seated. The impression upon my mind was, that I was asked into the cabin to luncheon. It is seldom that so many midshipmen find themselves collected together at their captain's table, no other officer being present. The situation was novel. I hope, Captain Reud, that you will not make it unpleasant. We seized the golden opportunity, very fervently, to drink your health, with due honours, in your absence. I am conscious of no offence, without too much devotion to my commander may be construed into one. What my messmates may think of their conduct, by their desertion from your table, it is not for me to say. As yet, I do not feel unworthy of a place at it. If there has been any little mistake in the invitation, I shall be most anxious to retire."

During this impertinent speech of mine, the offspring of utter recklessness as to consequences, I had, without moving from my place at the table, fixed my eyes composedly on Captain Reud. I did not mean the expression of them to be insulting, nor did I wish it to be supplicatory: Whatever it might have been, it had the effect of gradually dispersing the angry scowl from his brow, though a certain degree of sternness still remained. When I had finished, expecting of course to be under an arrest, or sent to the mast-head, I was surprised, and a good deal gratified, by hearing him say distinctly, though not very cordially—

"Mr. Rattlin, you know your place—your messmates know their's. Captain Reeves, Mr. Farmer, Rattlin, pray be seated."

The half dozen poltroons all stood huddled together, like a small flock of intimidated sheep, between the two guns in the cabin, right opposite me. I was tolerably hungry, and yet I enjoyed the tantalized expression of the countenances of the renegades, quite as much as the good viands with which I so plentifully supplied myself.

The wine circulated. Captain Reud grew gracious, and

Captain Reeves impatient to view the seven curious ornithological specimens of the genus *Corvus*, that his host had brought with him from the West. I guessed what was coming, which prevented my warming towards my captain, with his returning kindness.

Captain Reeves could talk of nothing else but birds, and of these particular seven birds. "Where were they?"

"Oh! close at hand."

"Large?"

"Stand from five to six feet high."

"Good God! they must eat enormously."

"Voraciously," and here the wicked Creole gave me a right jovial look. "They are a great expense to me, as well as annoyance."

"But birds of this size must be very heavy on the wing. In their natural state do they fly?"

"Sluggishly enough; but I have seen them very often aloft."

The naturalist was completely mystified; but his host would not produce them, as he said, that, when his curiosity was gratified, he should no longer have the pleasure of his company, and the happiness of passing the decanters to him. It was in vain that Captain Reud endeavoured to lead him to speak of subjects interesting to persons about to visit England, after the space of more than three years. He could speak of nothing but the genus *Corvus*.

"Upon my word, Captain Reud," said he, "I don't wish to seem impatient, but the wind is freshening. I long to be on board. I wish I could take one of these huge specimens with me."

"You are heartily welcome to the whole batch."

"Thank you, Captain Reud," said I, rising and making him my best bow.

"Sharp lad, upon my soul!" said Reud.

"Thank you heartily, and very kindly, too. I will write a treatise upon them," said Reeves.

"I should like to read it," said I, turning to the naturalist.

"You shall, my good boy, you shall," said he, patting me very kindly on the head. "He is a sharp lad, indeed, Captain Reud; he wishes to read my treatise. After this treatise is finished, I shall send all the specimens to the Linnæan Society, of which I am an *unworthy* member," (with a great emphasis on the word *unworthy*). "I will first send them to Pidcock's menagerie," (there were no Zoological Gardens

then,) "with a perfect understanding, that, when they are dead, they shall be well stuffed."

"They would much rather be stuffed alive," said Reud, all glee, for he was now in his element. Our first lieutenant was totally in the dark, and looked silly in trying to look sapient. Pigtop and company, between the guns, were staring like those white, delicate-looking monsters with four feet, that own so many petticoats, so general in poulterer's shops about Christmas, with remarkably protuberant eyes. Who could mention a stuck pig, in these days of refinement, under a less redundant paraphrase?

"A joke, of course—a very good joke," said the learned in ornithology. "A very good joke in a goose's mouth. I've seen it before somewhere—but never mind. However, seeing whence it came, it will do."

"But I rather think," said Reud, "that these birds would not like to be stuffed when they are dead."

"Nonsense—but what do they care about it? By-the-by, now you have got them on board, and in a state of confinement, do they still carry on the process of incubation?"

"Continually. They are all day and all night long hatching—"

"Gracious heavens! what?"

"Mischief."

"You are laughing at me—pray let me see them at once."

"In the first place, permit me to retract my offer of the whole—you are welcome to six of them heartily; and I wish that I may induce you to take them away—filthy creatures! The seventh I shall retain for the sake of past good feelings; though I begin to suspect that he is not quite of so *good a breed* as I once thought him."

This was wormwood to me. With a flushed brow I rose from my chair, and I cursed, in my heart, Joshua Dauntton and his plausible tongue.

"I shall not even thank you, Captain Reud, for the preference," said I, "but request that I may be caged off with the lot."

"Reud, seeing that the equivoque could be carried no farther, explained, "Don't be a fool, Rattlin, but sit down. Captain Reeves, these seven ornithological curiosities are of the generic description *Corvus*, or crow, their specific term, *scare*—there is one beside you, and the other six are between the guns. If you have seen finer specimens of *scarecrows*, I'll eat them, when you have roasted them as well as I have roasted you."

And then he indulged for a minute in his low, venomous

giggle, that seemed to be the most perfect enjoyment of which his malicious bosom was capable.

"Captain Reud," said I, "tell me, sir, when, not seven months ago, I stood between you and death, did I show any white feather?"

"On my soul, you did not."

"Then, sir, let me tell you—as far as I am concerned—I find your joke as deficient in wit as it is bad in taste."

"Stop—beware—"

"I am quite of the same opinion with the young scarecrow that has just cawed," said Captain Reeves, who was a grave man, and who never could see any point in a joke against himself. "With your permission, I will return on board, and look after my own poultry."

So, after a formal exchange of bows, the strange commander left the cabin, Reud hallooing out to him as he left, "You won't forget the treatise, Reeves."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A dissertation on naval glory—Ralph falleth into disgrace, and findeth the march of his miseries arrested, by being himself put under an arrest—A fine ship run down, and nobody to blame but "the Reefer."

THE incident recorded in the last chapter will be read as a fiction—but it is fact, unexaggerated fact, as to the circumstances, though a little fined down in the relation; for the broad coarseness of the scene, as it was really acted, would be deemed too improbable, even for farce. It was events like these, and the previous overstraining of the mind, that fully determined me to take the first opportunity of quitting the service—not in disgust at it, for it was even then, in its unimproved state, a beautiful one—but it had, and still hath, its anomalies: they are but few, and I had stumbled upon the worst of them. It was very singular, but no less true, since the self-introduction of Joshua Dauntton, I had never been happy, and never fortunate.

Through the rude and the cold flying mists of winter, after we had struck soundings, we again saw England. It was in the inclement month of January. I was starved and half clad. A beggar of any decent pretension, had he met me in the streets of London, would have taken the wall of me, though I had, at the time, more than three hundred dollars in cash, Spanish doubloons and silver, a power for drawing bills for a hundred a year, more than three years' pay due, and prize money to a very considerable amount.

Under these circumstances, my eyes once more greeted my native land. Where were my glow of patriotism and my pas-

sion of poetry? They were not. I saw nothing before me but a black, a barren, and a forbidding coast. I endeavoured to fix my mind upon the fields over which I had bounded in my boyhood—I measured them in my mind's eye, hedge by hedge—they were distinct enough, but there was no sunshine upon them. Alas! I had seen a brighter sun elsewhere. And the friends that had been kind to the unowned one at Stick-enham—yes, I would see them. But I had no longer the frank heart to offer. Yes, I would seek them, and be cold and studiously polite. I felt that I had not succeeded in my profession, with what *they* would call success. I had done my duty, and perhaps done it with high promise. Good, easy souls! I am sure they fancied that I should have returned something—perhaps a little—short of an admiral, but not very much.

I should like to know how a midshipman is to distinguish himself, otherwise than by doing his duty honourably and strictly, and that is no distinction at all, for they almost all do it. "I wish we may have some brilliant action," says one of the uninitiated, "for I wish to distinguish myself." "Very well, my young aspirant"—which used, by-the-by, to be the corresponding term for midshipman in the French language—"very well, my young sir; here you are, in your frigate, alongside a heavier vessel than your own. Nay, it shall be a seventy-four, if you please, all for your particular honour and glory. There you are, stationed at the four after-guns on the main-deck. Blaze away, and distinguish yourself now." "O dear! I can't, for the smoke, and the smother, and the noise. I can't perform any heroic act here." "Well, but what *can you* do for your country and his majesty?" "I can only see that the men train their guns well, and that they are properly supplied with powder and shot—this will never get my name in the gazette." "Only do that well, sir, and you will distinguish yourself. Never mind the gazette; your turn will come when you are a skipper, even, perhaps, when a lieutenant."

The same applies to the young gentlemen, station them where you will. Gouty old gentlemen, who have sons at sea, and are prone to read the lives of Nelson and of our many other noble naval heroes, must rid themselves of the illusion of seeing the darlings of their hopes start away from their obscure yet important quarters, jump up in the faces of the enemy, flourish valorously their little dirks, lead the boarders over a hand-spike from ship to ship, put the French captain, surrounded by his officers, to the sword, haul down the tricolor with his own hands, and finally exclaim—"Hurrah for glory and Old England!" I say, elderly ladies, and gentlemen as elderly, must not expect this, notwithstanding their own folly, and some very funny naval novels that have been published. People must not desert their stations in action, even to do little bits of glorious heroism. The whole fraternity of reefers ought to thank me for this digression.

Thus, in the naval-novel sense of the word, I had not distinguished myself. My name had certainly appeared some few times in the captain's despatches, to the effect that "Mr. Rattlin, in the cutter, had gallantly supported Lieutenant Selby, in cutting out a schooner," &c. Glory! what did the world at large care about the paltry schooner, or the unknown lieutenant, who really did a prodigy of valour?"—or the infinitely more insignificant "Mr. Rattlin, who gallantly supported the said lieutenant in the cutter?" But of all this I do not complain. It is just as it should be—only—only I wish that our discriminating countrymen should comprehend what a vast amount of unrecorded heroism goes to make up even a single victory—heroism which is not, but ought to be, glory.

I got into disgrace. I record it frankly, as my boast is, throughout this biography, to have spoken the truth of all the different variations of my life. Since the captain's incipient insanity, the Eos had gradually become an ill-regulated ship. The gallant first lieutenant, formerly so smart and so active, had not escaped the general demoralization. He was a disappointed man. He had not distinguished himself. God knows, it was neither for want of daring nor expense of life. He had cut out every thing that could be carried, and had attempted almost every thing that could not. I am compelled to say that these bloody onslaughts were as often failures as successes. He was no nearer his next step on the ladder of promotion than before. His temper became soured, and he was now often lax, sometimes unjust, and always irritable. The other officers shared in the general falling off, and too often made the quarter-deck a display for temper.

The third lieutenant—yes, I think it was the third—had mast-headed me, about the middle of the first dog-watch; most likely deservedly, for I had lately affected to give the proud and sullen answer. Before I went aloft to my miserable station, I represented to him that I had the first watch; that there were now but three of the young gentlemen doing their duty, the others having very wisely fallen ill, and taken the protection of the sick-list. I told him, respectfully enough, 'that, if he kept me up in that disagreeable station from half-past five till eight, I could not possibly do my duty, for very weariness, from eight till midnight. It was a physical impossibility.' But he was inexorable. Up I went, the demon of all evil passions gnawing at my heart.

It was almost dark when I went aloft. It was a gusty, dreary night, bitterly, very bitterly, cold, I was ill clad. At intervals, the fierce and frozen drifts, like the stings of so many wasps, drove fiercely into my face; and I believe that I must confess that I cried over my crooked and aching fingers, as the circulation went on with agony, or stopped with numbness. It is true, I was called down within the hour; but that hour of suffering had done me much constitutional mischief. I was stupified as much as if I had committed a debauch

upon fat ale. However, I was too angry to complain, or to seek relief from the surgeon. I went on deck at half-past eight; with obtuse faculties and a reckless heart.

The frigate was, with a deeply-laden convoy, attempting to hold her course in the chops of the channel. It blew very hard. The waves were bounding about us with that short and angry leap peculiar, in tempestuous weather, to the narrow seas between England and France. It was excessively dark; and, not carrying sufficient sail to tack, we were wearing the ship every half hour, showing, of course, the proper signal lights to the convoy. We carried also the customary poop-light of the commodore.

Such was the state of affairs at a little after nine. The captain, the first lieutenant, the master, the officer of the watch, and the channel pilot, that we had taken on board off the Scilly Islands, with myself, were all on deck. Both the signal midshipmen were enjoying the comforts of sickness in their warm hammocks below. Now, I will endeavour to give a faithful account of what happened; and let the unprejudiced determine, in the horrible calamity that ensued, how much blame was fairly attributable to me. I must premise that, owing to shortness of number, even when all were well, there was no fore-castle midshipman.

A dreadful gust of icy wind, accompanied by the arrowy sleet, rushes aft, rather heading us.

"The wind is getting more round to the east. We'd better wear at once," said the pilot to the master.

"The pilot advises us to wear," said the master to the captain.

"Mr. Farmer," said the captain to the first lieutenant, "watch and idlers, wear ship."

"Mr. Pond," said Mr. Farmer to the lieutenant of the watch, (a diminutive and peppery little man, with a squeaking voice, and remarkable for nothing else except having a large wife and a large family, whom he was impatient to see), "wear."

"Mr. Rattlin," squeaked Mr. Pond through his trumpet, "order the boatswain's mate to turn the watch and idlers up—wear ship."

"Boatswain's mate," bawled out the sleepy and sulky Mr. Rattlin, "watch and idlers, wear ship."

"Ay, ay, sir—wheew, wheew, whittle wheew—watch and idlers, wear ship! Tumble up there, tumble up. Master-at-arms, brush up the bonepolishers."

"What an infernal nonsensical ceremony!" growled the pilot *softe voice*; "all bawl, and no haul—lucky we've plenty of sea-room."

"Jump aft, Mr. Rattlin," said the captain, "and see that the convoy signal to wear is all right."

Mr. Rattlin makes one step aft.

"Is the fore-topmast staysail halliards well manned, Mr. Rattlin?—Jump forward and see," said the officer of the watch.

Mr. Rattlin makes one step forward.

"Is the deep sea-lead ready?" said the master. "Mr. Rattlin, jump into the chains, and see."

Mr. Rattlin makes one step to the right—*starboard*, the wise it call.

"Mr. Rattlin, what the devil are you about?—where's the hand stationed to the foresheet?" said the first lieutenant. "Jump there and see."

Mr. Rattlin makes one step to the left hand—*port*, the wise it call.

"Where's the midshipman o' th' watch—where's the midshipman o' th' watch?" roars out the captain. "By Heavens, there's no light to show over the bows! Mr. Rattlin, be smart, sir—jump forward, and see to it."

The chilled, the torpid, and half-stupified Mr. Rattlin finally went forward on the fore-castle, where he ought to have been from the first, the more especially as the boatswain was also on the sick list.

The consequence of all these multitudinous and almost simultaneous orders—to jump and see, when, by-the-by, it was too dark to see anything a yard off properly—was, that one of the signal lanterns was blown out, and the signal consequently imperfect—that the fore-topmast staysail halliards were so badly manned, that those upon them could scarcely start that then necessary sail from its netting—that the people were not ready with the deep sea-lead—that little Mr. Pond was obliged to put down his trumpet, and ease off the foresheet himself till relieved by the quarter-master; but, still, there actually *was* a lantern over the bows, and in good time.

Well, the noble ship was no longer buffeted on her bows by the furious wind: as the haughty Essex turned on his heel from the blow of his termagant mistress queen, so did the Eos turn her back to the insulting blast, and flew rapidly before it. Owing to the darkness of the night, assisted by the weak voice of Mr. Pond, whose orders could not be very distinctly heard, perhaps a little to his lubberly manner of working the ship, the bounding frigate was much longer before the wind than necessary. I was straining my sight near the cathead on one side, and the captain of the fore-castle on the other, but we could discover nothing in the nearly palpable obscure.

It is an awful thing, this rushing through the darkness of a large floating world. The planets urge for ever their sublime course, but not as does a ship when the veil of night is on the ocean. The glorious luminaries travel through regions of light, directed by unerring wisdom, but the ark of man stumbles and reels through night and folly, and rashness too often stands at the helm. Alas! I seldom viewed our frigate careering at night through the waters, with nothing to be seen but these the gorgeous stars above her, but I was apt to fancy she was as one of the heavenly brotherhood, humble certainly in her imitation, and lost in her sphere.

On she dashed, and our anxious eyes saw nothing, whilst our minds feared greatly:—she is at her utmost speed. In her reckless course she seems sufficiently powerful to break up the steadfast rock, or tear the shoal from its roots at the bottom of the ocean. On she rushes! I think I hear faintly the merchant cry of “Yeo—yo—yeo!” but the roar of the vexed waters beneath our bows, and the eternal singing of the winds through the frost-stiffened shrouds, prevent my being certain of the fact. But, I tremble excessively—when, behold, a huge long black mass is lying lazily before us, and so close that we can almost touch it!

“Hard a-port!” I roared out at the very top of my voice.

“Hard a-starboard!” sang out the captain of the forecabin, equally loud.

Vain, vain were the contradictory orders. The frigate seemed to leap at the object before as at a prey; and dire was the crash that ensued. As we may suppose the wrathful lioness springs upon the buffalo, and, meeting more resistance from its horny bulk than she had suspected, recoils and makes another spring, so did the Eos strike, rebound, then strike again.—I felt two distinct percussions.

The second stroke divided the obstacle; she passed through it, or over it, and the eye looked in vain for the vast West Indian, the bearer of wealth, and gay hopes, and youth, and infancy, manly strength, and female beauty. There was a smothered feminine shriek, hushed by the whirling and down-absorbing waves, almost as soon as made. It was not loud, but it was fearfully distinct, and painfully human. One poor wretch only was saved, to tell her name and speak of the perished.

As usual, they had kept but a bad look-out. Her officers and her passengers were making merry in the cabin—the wine-cup was at their lips, and the song was floating joyously from the mouths of the fair ones returning to the land of their nativity. The blooming daughters, the newly-married wife, and two matrons with their innocent ones beside them, were all in the happiness of their hopes, when the Destroyer was upon them suddenly, truly like a strong man in the darkness of night; and they were all hurled, in the midst of their un- censurable revelry, to a deep grave, over which no tombstone shall ever tell “of their whereabouts.”

Our own jib-boom was snapped off short, and as quickly as is a twig in frosty weather. Supposing the ship had struck, every soul rushed on deck. They thanked God it was *only* the drowning of some forty fellow-creatures, and the destruction of a fine merchant ship. They hauled the single poor fellow that was saved on board. The consternation among the officers was very great. It was too hard to lower the boats: no effort was or could be made to rescue any chance struggler not carried down in the vortex of the parted and sunken ship—all was blank horror.

Besides the consternation and dismay natural to the appalling accident, there was the fear of the underwriters, and of the owners, and of damages, before the eyes of the captain. I was sent for aft.

"I had not charge of the deck," said Captain Reud, looking fiercely at the first lieutenant. "I am not responsible for this lubberly calamity."

"I had not the charge of the watch or the deck either," said Mr. Farmer, in his turn looking at small Mr. Pond, who was looking aghast; "surely, I cannot be held to be responsible."

"But, you gave orders, sir—I heard you myself give the word to raise the fore-tack—that looks very like taking charge of the deck—no, no, I am not responsible."

"Not so fast, not so fast, Mr. Pond. I only assisted you for the good of the service, and to save the foresail."

Mr. Pond looked very blank indeed, until he thought of the master, and then he recovered a great portion of his usual vivacity. Small men are always vivacious.

"No, no, I am not responsible—I was only working the ship under the directions of the master. Read the night orders, Mr. Farmer."

"The night orders be d——d!" said the gruff old master.

"I will not have my night orders d——d," said Reud. "You and the officer of the watch must share the responsibility between you."

"No offence at all, sir, to you or the night orders either. I am heartily sorry I d——d them—heartily—but, in the matter of wearing this here ship precisely at that there time, I only acted under the pilot, who has charge till we are securely anchored. Suretye, I can't be 'sponsible."

"Well," said the pilot, "here's a knot of tangled rope yarn—but that yarn wo'nt do for old Weatherbrace, for, d'ye see, I'm a Sea William (civilian), and not in no ways under martial law—and I'm only aboard this here craft as respects shoals and that like—I'm clearly not 'sponsible!—nothing to do in the varsal world with working her—'sponsible! pooh!—why did ye not keep a better look out for'ard?"

"Why, Mr. Rattlin, why?" said the captain, the first lieutenant, the lieutenant of the watch, and the master.

"I kept as good a one as I could—the lanterns were over the bows."

"You may depend upon it," said the captain, "that the matter will not be permitted to rest as it is. The owners and underwriters will demand a court of inquiry. Mr. Rattlin had charge of the fore-castle at the time. Mr. Rattlin, come here, sir. You sang out, just before this calamity happened, to port the helm."

"I did, sir."

"Quarter-master," continued Reud, "did you port the helm? Now, mind what you say; did you, sir? because if you *did not*, six dozen."

"We did, sir—hard a-port."

"And the ship immediately after struck?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pooh! the case is clear—we need not talk about it any longer. A clear case, Mr. Farmer. Mr. Rattlin has charge of the fore-castle—he describes a vessel a-head—he takes upon himself to order the helm a-port, and we run over and sink her accordingly. He is responsible, clearly."

"Clearly," was the answering echo from all the rejectors of responsibility.

"Mr. Rattlin, I am sorry for you. I once thought you a promising young man; but, since your desertion at Aniana—we must not mince matters now—you have become quite an altered character. You seem to have lost all zeal for the service. Zeal for the service is a thing that ought not to be lost; for a young gentleman without zeal for the service is a young gentleman, surely—you understand me—who is not zealous in the performance of his duty. I think I have made myself tolerably clear. Do you think, sir, that I should hold now the responsible commission I do hold under his majesty, if I had been without zeal for the service? I am sorry that I have a painful duty to perform. I must place you under an arrest till I know what may be the port admiral's pleasure concerning this unpleasant business; for—for the loss of the *Mary Anne* of London you are clearly responsible."

"Clearly," (*omnes rursus.*)

"Had you sung out hard a-starboard, instead of hard a-port, the case might have been different."

"Clearly."

"Go down below to your berth, and consider yourself a prisoner. The young gentlemen in his Majesty's service are not permitted to run down West Indiamen with impunity."

"Clearly."

In these kind of capstan-head court-martials, at which captains will sometimes administer reefers' law, "Woe to the weakest!" A defence was quite a work of superfluity; so, consoling myself with the vast responsibility with which, all at once, I found myself invested, I went and turned in, anathematizing every created thing above an inch high and a foot below the same dimensions. However, in a very sound sleep I soon forgot every thing—even the horrible scene I had just witnessed.

CHAPTER XIX.

Distressing disclosures, and some very pretty symptoms of brotherly love—with much excellent indignation utterly thrown away—Joshua Dauntton either a very great man, or a very great rogue—perhaps both, as the terms are often synonymous.

I HOPE the reader has not forgotten Joshua Dauntton, for I

did not. Having a very especial regard to the health of his body, he took care to keep himself ill. The seventy-one lashes due to him he would most generously have remitted altogether. His eagerness to cancel the debt was only equal to Captain Reud's eagerness to pay, and to that of his six midshipmen masters to see it paid. Old Pigtop was positively devout in this wish; for, after the gash had healed, it left a very singular scar, that traversed his lip obliquely, and gave a most ludicrous expression to a face that was before remarkably ill-favoured. One side of his visage seemed to have a continual ghastly smirk, like what you might suppose to decorate the countenance of a half-drunken Succubus; the other, a continual whimper, that reminded you of a lately whipped baboon.

I concluded that Daunton was really ill, for he kept to his hammock in the sick bay; and Dr. Thompson was much too clever, and too old a man-of-war's man, to be deceived by a simulated sickness.

The day after, when I was enjoying my arrest in the dignified idleness of a snooze in a pea-jacket, on one of the lockers, the loblolly-boy came to me, saying that Daunton was much worse, and that he humbly and earnestly requested to see me. I went, though with much reluctance. He appeared to be dreadfully ill, yet an ambiguous smile lighted up his countenance when he saw me moodily standing near him.

He was seated on one corner of the bench in the bay, apparently under the influence of ague, for he trembled excessively, and he was well wrapped up in blankets. Altogether, notwithstanding the regularity of his features, he was a revolting spectacle. The following curious dialogue ensued.

"Daunton, I am ready to hear you."

"Thank you, Ralph."

"Fellow! you may have heard that I am a prisoner—in disgrace—but not in dishonour; but know, scoundrel, that, if I were to swing the next minute at the yard-arm, I would not tolerate or answer to such familiarity. Speak respectfully, or I leave you."

"Mr. Rattlin, pray do not speak so loudly, or the other invalids will hear us."

"Hear us, sirrah! they may, and welcome. Scoundrel! can we have any secrets?"

The fiery hate that flashes from the eye of venomous impotence played upon me, at the very moment that the tone of his voice became more bland, and his deportment more submissive.

"Mr. Rattlin, your honour, will you condescend to hear me? It is for your own good, sir. Pray be no longer angry. I think I am dying; will you forgive me?—will you shake hands with me?" And he extended to me his thin and delicate hand.

"Oh, no, no!" I exclaimed, accompanying my sneer with all the scorn that I could put in my countenance. "Such things as you don't die—reptiles are tenacious of life. For the malicious and ape-like mischiefs that you have done to

me and to my messmates—though in positive guilt I hold them to be worse than actual felony—I forgive you—but, interchange the token of friendship with such as you—never!”

“Ralph Rattlin, I know you!”

“Insolent rascal! know yourself; dare to send for me no more. I leave you.”

I turned upon my heel, and was about leaving this floating hospital, when again that familiar tone of the voice, that had struck the inmost chord of my heart, in his shrieking appeal at the gangway, arrested me, and the astounding words which he uttered, quickly brought me to his side. In that strange tone, that seemed to have been born with my existence, he exclaimed, distinctly, yet not loudly, “Brother Ralph, listen to me!”

“Liar, cheat, swindler!” I hissed forth in an impassioned whisper, close to his inclined ear, “my heart disowns you—my soul abhors you—my gorge rises at you. I abominate—I loathe you—most contemptible, yet most ineffable liar!”

“Oh, brother!” and a hectic flush came over his chalky countenance, whilst a sardonic smile played over his features. “You can speak low enough now. ’Tis a pity that primogeniture is so little regarded in his majesty’s vessels of war; but methinks that you are but little dutiful, seeing that I am some ten years your senior, and that I do not scorn to own *you*, though you are the son of my father’s paramour.”

The horrible words shot ice into my heart. I could no longer retain my stooping position over him, but, feeling faint, and very sick, I sat down involuntary beside him. But the agony of apprehension was but for a moment. A mirth, stern and wild, brought its relief to my paralysed bosom, and, laughing loudly, I jumped up and exclaimed, “Josh, you little vagabond, come, carry me a-pick-a-back—son of a respectable pawnbroker of Whitechapel—how many paramours was the worthy old gentleman in the habit of keeping? Respectable scion of such a respectable parent, who finished his studies by a little tramping, a little thieving, a little swindling, a little forging—I heartily thank you for the amusement you have afforded me.”

“Oh, my good brother, deceive not yourself! I repeat that I have tramped, thieved, swindled, ay, and forged. And to whom do I owe all this ignominy? To you—to you—to you. Yet I do not hate you very, very much. You showed some fraternal feeling when they seared my back with the indelible scar of disgrace. I have lied to you, but it suited my purpose.”

“And I have given you the confidence due to a liar.”

“What! still incredulous, brother of mine! Do you know these—and these?”

The handwriting was singular, and very elegant. I knew the letters at once. They were the somewhat affected amatory effusions of that superb woman, Mrs. Causand, whom I have described in the early part of this life. They spoke of

Ralph—of Ralph Rattlin—and described, with tolerable accuracy, my singular birth at the Crown Inn at Reading.

There were three letters. The two first that I read contained merely passionate protestations of affection; the third, that had reference to myself, spoke darkly. After much that is usual in the ardent style of unhallowed love, it went on, as nearly as I can recollect, in these words—"I have suffered greatly—suffered with you, and for you. The child is, however, now safe, and well provided for. It is placed with a decent woman of the name of Brandon, Rose Brandon. A discovery now is impossible. We have managed the thing admirably. The child is fair," &c., &c.

In the midst of my agitation, I remarked that the writer did not speak of the infant as "my child," nor with the affection of a mother—and yet, without a great stretch of credulity, the inference seemed plain that she was the parent of it, though not a fond one.

"Mysterious man! who are you, and who am I?"

"Your disgraced, your discarded, yet your legitimate, brother. More it suits me not now that you should know. I am weak in frame, but I am steel in purpose. You, you have been the bane of my life. Since your clandestine birth, our father loved me no more. I will have my broad acres back—I will—they are mine—and you only stand between me and them."

"Desperate and degraded man!—I believe, even after this pretended confession, that you are an imposter to me, as much as you are to the rest of the world, I now understand some things that were before dark to me. My life seems to stand in your way—and your cowardice only prevents you from taking it. You tell me you are a forger—these letters are forgeries. Mrs. Causand is not my mother, nor are you my brother. Pray, where did you get them?"

"I stole them from our father's escritoire."

"Amiable son! But I weary myself no more with your tissue of falsehoods. To-morrow we shall cast anchor. I will leave the service, and devote the rest of my life to the discovery of my origin. I will learn your real name, I will trace out your crimes—and the hands of justice shall at once terminate my doubts, and your life of infamy—we are enemies to the death!"

"A fair challenge and fairly spoken. I accept it, from my soul. You refused my hand in brotherly love; for, by the grey hairs of our common parent, in brotherly love it was offered to you—will you now take it as a pledge of a burning, a never-dying, enmity between us—it is at present emaciated and withered. It has been seized up at your detested gangway—it has been held up at the bar of justice; but it will gain strength, my brother—there, take it, sir—and despise it not."

I shuddered as I received the pledge of hate; and his grasp, though I was in the plenitude of youthful vigour, was stronger than my own.

This dreadful conference had been carried on principally in whispers; but, owing to several burst of emotion on my part, enough had transpired among those present to give them to understand that I had been claimed as a brother, and that I had very hard-heartedly rejected the claim. The sick murmured among themselves, and looked upon me displeasingly.

After we had passed our mutual defiance, there was silence between us for several minutes; he coiling himself up like an adder in his corner, and I pacing the deck, my bosom swelling with contending emotions. "If he should really be my brother," thought I. The idea was horrible to me. I again paused in my walk, and looked upon him stedfastly; but I found no sympathy with him. His style of thin and pallid beauty was hateful to me—there was no expression in his countenance upon which I could hang the remotest feeling of love. He bore my scrutiny, in his weakness, proudly.

"Daunton," said I, at length, "you have failed: in endeavouring to make a tool, you have created an enemy and an avenger of the outraged laws. I shall be in London in the course of eight-and-forty hours—you cannot escape me—if it cost me a hundred pounds, I will loose the bloodbounds of justice after you—you shall be made in chains to give up your hateful secret. I am no longer a boy, nor you, nor the lawyer that administers my affairs, shall no longer make a plaything of me. I will know who I am. Thank God, I can always ask Mrs. Cherfeuil."

At that name, a smile, no longer bitter, but deeply melancholy, and almost sweet, came over his effeminate features. But it lasted not long. That smile, like a few tones of his voice, seemed so familiar to me. Was I one of two existences, the consciousness of the one nearly, but not quite blotting out the other? I looked upon him again, and the smile was gone; but a look of grief, solemn and heart-rending, had supplied its place—and then the big and involuntary tear stood in his eye. I know not whether it fell, for he held down his arm to the concealment of his face, and spoke not.

Had the wretch a heart, after all?

As I turned to depart, he lifted up his face, and all that was amiable in its expression had fled. With a calm sneer he said, "May I trouble you, Mr. Rattlin, for those letters which I handed over to you for your perusal?"

"I shall keep them."

"Is your code of equity as low as mine? They are my property; I paid dearly enough for them. And what says your code of honour to such conduct?"

"There, take your detested forgeries! We shall meet in London."

"Mr. Rattlin forgets that he is a prisoner."

"Absurd! The charge cannot be sustained for a moment."

"Be it so. Peradventure, I shall be in London before you."

CHAPTER XX.

Listeners seldom hear good things of themselves—Ralph at a dreadful discount with his messmates, but contrives to settle his accounts with his principal debtor.

I LEFT him, with a strong foreboding that he would work me some direful mischief. Wretched, unutterably wretched, were the ensuing day and night that I passed. I retired to the gloom of the midshipmen's den, and batten on my terrible reflections to a fulness of misery that none but youth can feel, or feeling bear up against. I could not disbelieve, and I would not believe, him. The sweet creations of my dreams by night, of my visions and my imaginings by day, were that I was of honourable, if not of distinguished, birth. Over these the base enchanter had waved his wand; and they stood before me now in hideous shapes. Contumely had overtaken me, even where I was; and scorn and contempt, succeeded by its pitiful train of followers, seemed to be collecting their venom, in order to hoot me through the world.

For the long day, I sat, with my head buried in my hands on the sordid table of our berth. I ate not, I spoke not. The ribaldry of my coarse associates moved me not; their boisterous and vulgar mirth aroused me not. They thought me, owing to my arrest, and my anticipations of its consequences, torpid with fear. They were deceived. I was never more alive. My existence was—if I may so speak—glowing and fiery hot; my sense of being was intense with various misery. My brain was at once clear and scorching. With all this excitement, there came not the least taint of mental aberration. My intellects were never more unclouded. I was never more capable of girding up my loins, and doing battle, with the world, like a strong man.

Towards evening, another piece of intelligence reached me, that alarmed and astounded me. Since the laying on of the one lash on the back of Joshua Dauntton, our old servant had descended from the mizen-top, again to wait upon us. He was, in his way, an insatiate news-gatherer; but he was as liberal in dispensing it as he was eager in acquiring it.

The midshipmen were drinking, out of the still unbroken cups and two or three tin-panikins, their grog at eight o'clock

in the evening, when our unshod and dirty attendant spoke thus:

"Oh, Mr. Pigtop!—such news!—such strange news! You'll be so very sorry to hear it, sir, and so will all the young gentleman."

"What, has the ship tumbled overboard, or the pig-ballast mutinied for arrears of pay?"

"Oh, sir, ten thousand times worse than that! That thief of the world, sir, Joshua Daunton, is not to have his six dozen, after all, sir, though he did corrupt all the midshipmen's clothes, sir. Dr. Thompson has taken him into his own cabin, and nothing is now too good for him."

"But hanging," said the indignant and scarred master's-mate. "If he's not flogged, I'll have the life out of him yet though he should turn out to be the only son of my Lord Dun-know-who." Pigtop was a wit, in a small midshipman-like way. "He's turned out to be some great man, they say, however—in clog or so, I think they call it; though, for my part, I remembers him in irons well enough not more than a fortnight aback—and he's had a taste of the girl with nine tails, however—that's one comfort to me, whatever he may turn out."

The vulgar have strange sources from which to derive comfort.

"But, are you sure of all this, Bill?" said Mr. Staines. "Because, if he should turn out to be somebody, I'll make him pay me for my traps; that's as certain now as that he'll be sent to Old Davy."

"Certain sure. He showed the Doctor papers enough to set up a lawyer's shop. But that's not the best of it—hum—ha! Do you think, Mr. Pigtop, that Mr. Rattlin's caulking?" (i. e., asleep).

"He has not moved this three hours. I owe Rattlin one for bringfng this blackguard on board. There may be something in this, after all. He claimed Rattlin as his brother at the gangway, or something of that sort. Now, that makes me comfortable. It will take our proud messmate down a peg or two, I'm calculating—with his smooth face, and his little bits of Latin and Greek, and his parleyvooring. Oh ho! but it's as good as a bottle of rum to me. With all his dollars, and his bills, and his airs, I never had a brother seized up at the gangway. And the captain and the officers once made such a fuss about him! D——n his smooth face!—I've a great mind to wake him, and hit him a wipe across the chaps. He knocked me down with the davit-block, for twitting him about

that girl of his, that was drowned swimming after him. I'll have satisfaction for that. The captain ordered me to leave the ship for being knocked down. Well—we shall see who'll be ordered to leave the ship now. I never caused a girl's death by deserting her. Upon my soul, I've a great mind to rouse him, and hit him a slap of the chaps. I hate smooth faces."

"Well," said Staines, "you may depend upon it, Rattlin is asleep, or he would have wopped you, Pigtop, for your compliments."

"He! I should very much like to see it—the spooney!"

"If Mr. Rattlin is caulking," said our *valet de chambre*, "there can't be no harm done whatsoever. But they do say, in the sick bay, as how Mr. Rattlin isn't himself, but that Joshua Dauntton is he, and that he is no body at all whatsoever; though Gibbons says, and he's a cute one, that if Mr. Rattlin is not Mr. Rattlin, seeing as how Joshua Dauntton is Mr. Rattlin, Mr. Rattlin must be somebody else—and, as a secret, he told me, as like as not, he must be Joshua Dauntton."

"Well here's comfort again. If Mr. Rattlin—Mr. indeed!—turns out to be a swindler, as I'm sure he will, it wouldn't be lawful, nor right, nor proper, in me to pay him the money I owe him," said the conscientious Mr. Pigtop. "D—n his smooth face!—I should like to have the spoiling of it."

Here was important information for me to ruminate upon. I was determined to remain still so long as I could gain any intelligence. But the conversation—if conversation we must term the gibberish of my associates—having taken another turn, I slowly lifted up my smooth face, and, confronting Mr. Pigtop's rough one, I said to him very coolly, "Mr. Pigtop, I am going to do what you would very much like to see—I am going to wop you."

"Wop me!—no, no, it's not come to that yet. I have heard something—I've a character to support—I must not demean myself."

"There is my smooth face right before you—I dare you to strike it—you dare not! Then, thus, base rascal, I beat you to the earth!" And Pigtop toppled down.

Now, all this was very wrong on my part, and very imprudent; for I must confess that he had before beaten me in a regular fistic encounter. But it was really a great relief to me. I longed for some vent to my angry and exasperated feelings. We were soon out in the steerage. Oh! the wolfishness of human nature! That low and brutal fight was a great luxury to me. Positively, at the time, I did not feel his blows. At

every murderous lunge that I made at him, I shouted, "Take that, Dauntton;" or, "Was that well planted, brother?"

Had we fought either with sword or pistol, the enjoyment would have been infinitely less to me. There was a stern rapture in pounding him beneath me—in dashing my hands in his blood—in disfiguring his face piecemeal. In our evil passions, we are sad brutes. Pigtop had the pluck natural to Englishmen—he would rather not have fought just then; but, having once begun, he seemed resolved to see it out manfully. The consequence was—to use a common and expressive phrase—I beat him to within an inch of his life, and then cried with vexation, because he could no longer stand up to be beaten out of the little that my fury had left him.

When the fray was over, my sturdy opponent had no reason to be envious of my smooth face.

Rather inflamed than satiated with the result of my encounter, whilst my opponent turned in his hammock, and there lay moaning, I, with both my eyes dreadfully blackened, and my countenance puffed up, threw myself upon the lockers, and there sleeplessly passed the whole night, devouring my own heart. If, for a moment, I happened to doze, I was tearing, in my imagination, Joshua Dauntton piecemeal, hurling him down precipices, or crushing him beneath the jagged fragments of stupendous rocks. It was a night of agony.

Twenty-five years ago, a set-to in a midshipman's berth was the general way of settling a dispute, or of avenging an insult. It was thought to be neither ungentlemanly nor degrading. Then we held our pistols and swords for enemies only; our fists were at the service of our friends.

We have altered all that now. I do but describe things as they were: let the Christian, and the moralist, and the gentleman, settle the matter between them, as to the manner in which these things ought to be arranged.

CHAPTER XXI.

Soft tack, one of the best tacks, after all—Legs of mutton sometimes produce friendships of long standing completely proved, as well as the value of good grain best ascertained, after it has been well thrashed.

THE next day we anchored in the Downs. Weak, stiff, and ill, I surveyed myself in my dressing-glass. My battered

features presented a hideous spectacle. But I cared not. I was a prisoner—I should have no occasion to emerge from the gloom of the steerage. This was truly a happy return to my native shores.

But I was not altogether left without commiseration—not altogether without sympathy. Both Dr. Thompson and the purser looked in to ~~see~~ me. The Doctor, especially, seemed to feel deeply for my situation. He told me that he had heard a strange story; but that, as yet, he was not at liberty to mention any particulars. He assured me that he entirely acquitted me of any participation in a series of base deceptions that had been practised upon an ancient, a distinguished, and wealthy family. He bade me hope for the best, and always consider him as my friend. The purser spoke to the same effect. I told them that my conviction was that it was they, and not I, who were the victims of deception. I stated that I had never pretended to rank or parentage of any sort; I acknowledged that everything connected with my family was a perfect mystery; but I asked them how they could place any faith in the assertions of a man who was in a mean capacity when I met with him—who had confessed to me a multiplicity of villainies—and who had corroborated the truth of his own confessions by his uniformly wicked conduct whilst on board.

To all this they both smiled very sapiently, and told me they had their reasons.

"Well," said I, "you are wise, and compared to me, old men. You cannot think this Daunton a moral character—you cannot think him honest. Still, telling me you are my friends, you champion him against me. And yet I know not how or in what manner. If he should prove my brother, the world is wide enough for us both: let him keep out of my way, if he can. Depend upon it, doctor, he is acting upon an after thought. He has been forced into a desperate course. You marked his abject cowardice at the gangway. During the many hours that he was in irons, before that punishment he so much dreaded was inflicted, why did he not then send for you, and, to save himself, make to you these important disclosures!—Merely because he did not then think of it. By heavens!—a light rushes on me—he is a house-breaker!—committed some burglary, and stolen papers relating to me; and no doubt he has followed me, first, with the intention of selling to me the purloined secret at some unconscionable price, and he has since thought fit to change his plan for something more considerable, more wicked."

"My poor boy," said the Doctor kindly, "you are under a delusion. Let me change the subject, and puncture you with my lancet under the eyes—they are dreadfully contused. Well, Rattlin, we are to go to Sheerness directly, and be paid off. You may depend upon it, the captain will think better about this arrest of yours, particularly as the two men at the wheel positively contradict the quarter-master, and affirm that the helm was put hard a-starboard, and not hard a-port. It appears to us that it was of little consequence, when the ship was first discovered, how the helm was put. The fault was evidently on the part of those who so awfully suffered for it. By-the-by, there has been a change among the lords of the Admiralty—there are two new junior ones."

"Begging your pardon, doctor, what the devil is a change among the junior lords of the Admiralty to a half-starved, imprisoned, blackened-eyed, ragged reefer?"

Much more than I was aware of.

"Now," said I to the purser, "if you wish to do me a real kindness, change me some of my Spanish for English money, and let the first bumboat that comes alongside be ready to go ashore in ballast, for I shall certainly clear it."

My request was immediately complied with; and my friends, for the present, took their leave.

Those blessed bearers of the good things of this life, the bumboats, were not yet permitted alongside. Every five minutes, I sent Master Bill up to see. Great are the miseries of a midshipman's berth, when the crockery is all broken, and the grog all drank, and the salt junk all eaten. But great, exceedingly great, are the pleasures of the same berth, when, after a long cruise, on coming into port, the first loaf of soft tack is on the table, the first leg of mutton is in the boiler, and the first pound of fresh butter is before the watering mouths of the expectants. Aldermen of London, you feed much—epicures of the West end, you feed delicately; but neither of you know what real luxuries are. Go to sea for six months upon midshipman allowance, eked out by midshipmen's improvidence; and, on your return, the greasy bumboat, first beating against the ship's sides, will afford you a practical lesson upon the art of papillary enjoyment.

"It is, I must confess, very unromantic, and not at all like the hero of three volumes, to confess that, for a time, my impulse of anger had given way to the gnawings of hunger; and I thought, for a time, less of Joshua Dauntton than of the first succulent cut into a leg of Southdown mutton.

The blessed *avator* at length took place. The bumboat

and the frigate lovingly rubbed sides, and, like an angel descending from heaven; I saw Bill coming down the after-hatchway, his face radiant with the glory of expectant repletion, a leg of mutton in each hand, two quartern loaves under each arm, and between each pair of loaves was jammed a pound of fresh butter. I had the legs of mutton in the berth, and laid on the table that I might contemplate them, whilst I sent my messenger up for as many bottles of porter as I could buy. But I was not permitted to enjoy the divine contemplation all to myself. My five messmates came to partake of this access of happiness. As the legs of mutton lay on the table, how devoutly we ogled their delicate fat, and speculated upon the rich and gravy-charged lean! We apostrophized them—we patted them endearingly with our hands—and, when Bill again made his appearance laden with sundry bottles of porter, our ecstacy was running at the rate of fourteen knots an hour.

My messmates settled themselves on the lockers, smiling amiably. How sorry they were that my eyes were so blackened, and my face so swollen! With what urbanity they smiled upon me! I was of the right sort—the good fellow—d—n him, who would hurt a hair of my head. They were all ready to go a step farther than purgatory for me.

"Gentlemen," said I, making a semicircular barricade round me of my four quartern loaves, my two pounds of fresh butter, and eleven of my bottles of porter, for I was just about to knock the head off the twelfth, (who under such circumstances could have waited for corkscrews), "Gentlemen," said I, "get your knives ready, we will have lunch." Shylock never flourished his more eagerly than did my companions their's, each eyeing a loaf.

"Gentlemen, we will have lunch—but, as I don't think that lately you have used me quite well, (countenances all round serious), and, as I have, as you all well know, laid out much money, with little thanks, upon this mess, (faces quite dejected), permit me to remind you, that there is still some biscuit in the bread-bag, and that this before me is private property."

The lower jaws of my messmates dropped, as if conscious that there would be no occupation for them. I cut a fine slice off the new bread, spread it thickly with the butter, tossed over a foaming mug of porter, and, eating the first mouthful of the delicious preparation, with a superfluity of emphatic smacks, I burst into laughter at the wo-begone looks around me.

"What," said I, "could you think so meanly of me? You have treated me according to your natures, I treat you according to mine. Fall-to, dogs, and devour!—peck up the crumbs, scarecrows, as the Creole calls you," and be filled. But, pause and be just, even to your own appetites. Notwithstanding our lunch, let us dine. Let us divide the four loaves into eight equal portions. There are six of us here, and Bill must have his share. We will have more for our dinner, when the legs of mutton make their appearance."

We drank each of us a bottle of porter, and finished our half-quartern loaves with wonderful alacrity, Bill keeping us gladsome company. My messmates then left the berth, pronouncing me a good fellow. The eighth portion of my soft tomato and butter, with a bottle of porter, I made the servant leave on the table; and then sent him again to the bumboat, to procure other necessities, to make the accompaniments to our mutton perfect.

In the mean time, Pigtop, who lay in his hammock, directly across the window of our berth, had been a tantalized observer of all that had passed. I crouched myself up in one corner of the hole, and was gradually falling into disagreeable ruminations, when Mr. Pigtop crept out of his hammock and into the berth, and sat himself down as far from me as possible.

"Rattlin," said he at length dolefully, "you have beaten me dreadfully."

"It was your own seeking—I am sorry for your sufferings."

"Well—I thank ye for that same—I don't mean the beating—you know that I stood up to you like a man. Is there malice between us?"

"On my part, none. Why did you provoke me?"

"I was wrong—infarnally wrong—and, may be, I would have owned it before—but for your quick temper, and that hard punch in the chaps. I have had the worst of it. It goes to my heart, Rattlin, that I, an old sailor, and a man nearly forty, should be knocked about by a mere boy—it is not decent—it is not becoming—it is not natural—I shall never get over it. I wish I could undo the done things of yesterday."

"And so do I, heartily—fervently."

"Well—that is kindly said—and I old enough to be your father—and twenty-five years at sea—beaten to a stand still. Sorry I ever entered the cursed ship."

"How much of all this," thought I, "is genuine feeling, how much genuine appetite?" I was sorry for the poor fellow, however.

"Rattlin, owing to one crooked thing and another, we have

lately fared miserably. The ship has been a hell upon the waters. I am faint for the want of something to support me. Is that prog and the bottle of porter private property."

"They are my property. I do not offer them to you, because I would not that you thought that I was aping magnanimity. For the respect that I shall always owe to an old sailor, I say to you frankly, that, if your feelings are sufficiently amicable towards me to take it, take it, and with it a welcome and a wish that it may do you much good—but, if your blood is still evil towards me, for the sake of your own integrity, you would reject it, though you starved."

"Rattlin, I break bread with you as a friend. I am profoundly sorry that I have been prejudiced against you—and there's my hand upon it."

I shook hands with him heartily, and said—"Pigtop, I cannot regret that I did my best to repel your insult, but I sincerely regret its consequences. Henceforward, you shall insult me twice before I lift my hand against you once."

"I will never insult you again. I will be your fast friend and perhaps I may have the means of proving it."

It now became my turn to be astonished. Instead of seeing the hungry oldster fall to, like a ravenous dog, he broke off a small corner from the bread, ate it, and was in the act of retiring, when I hailed him.

"Holloa!—Pigtop—what's in the wind now? My friend, you do but little honour to my cheer, and I am sure that you must want it."

"No, no," said Pigtop, with much feeling—"You shall never suppose that the old sailor sold the birthright of his honour for a mess of pottage."

"Well felt and well said, by all that's upright! But, nevertheless, you shall drink this bottle of porter, and eat this bread and butter—and so I'll e'en cut it up into very excellent rounds. D—n it, you shan't accept my friendship without accepting my fare. I like your spirit so well, Pigtop, that for your sake, I will never judge of a man again, until I have threshed him soundly."

To the surprise of my messmates, when they assembled punctually to the feast of mutton, they discovered me and old Pigtop, hand in hand across the table, discussing another bottle of porter.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ralph is placed in an awkward predicament, being put upon his trial to prove his indentify, and having no witness to call but himself—All voices against him but his own.

At this period, every day, nay, almost every hour, seemed to bring its startling event. Ere good digestion had followed our very good appetites, bustle and agitation pervaded the whole ship. It had been telegraphed from on shore that one of the junior lords of the Admiralty was coming on board immediately. There was blank dismay in our berth. How could my messmates possibly go on the quarter-deck, and assist to receive the dignified personage? Much did I enjoy the immunity that I supposed, being a prisoner, gave to me.

The portentous message came down that "the young gentlemen, in full uniform, are expected to be on the quarter-deck to receive the lord of the Admiralty." All the consolation that I could give was quoting to them the speech of Lady Macbeth to her guests—"Go, nor stand upon the order of your going." The firing of the salute from the main-deck guns announced the approach, and the clanking of the muskets of the marines on the deck, after they had presented arms, the arrival of the lord plainly to me, in my darksome habitation. Ten minutes had not elapsed, during which I was hugging myself with the thought that all this pomp and circumstance could not annoy me, when, breathless with haste, there rushed one, two, three, four messengers, each treading upon the heels of the other, telling me the lord of the Admiralty wished to see me immediately in the captain's cabin.

"Me! see me! What in the name of all that is disastrous, can he want with me?" I would come when I had made a little alteration in my dress. Trusting that he was as impatient as all great men usually are when dealing with little ones, I hoped by dilatoriness to weary him out, and thus remain unseen. Vain speculation! A minute had scarcely elapsed, when one of the lieutenants came down in a half friendly, half imperative manner, to acquaint me that I *must* come up immediately.

The scene that ensued—how can I sufficiently describe it! Had I not been sustained by the impudence of desperation, I

should have jumped overboard directly I had got on deck. I found myself, not well knowing by what kind of locomotion I got there, in the fore-cabin, where was spread a very handsome collation, round which were assembled some fifteen officers, all in their full-dress uniforms, in the midst of which, a feeble, delicate-looking, and excessively neatly dressed old gentleman stood, in plain clothes. His years must have been far beyond seventy. He was fidgetty, indeed, to that degree that would induce you to think that he was a little palsied.

I cannot answer for the silent operations that take place in other men's minds, but, in my own, even under the greatest misfortunes, a droll conceit will more rally my crushed spirits than all the moral consolations that Blair ever penned.

"If this be the *junior* lord of the Admiralty," thought I, "how venerably patriarchal must be his four seniors!" I smiled with the idea as I bowed.

Let us describe the person that smiled and bowed to this august assembly.

Figure to yourself a tall youth, attired in a blue cotton jacket, with the uniform button, a once white kerseymere waistcoat, and duck trowsers, on which were mapped, in cloudy colours—produced by stains of black-strap, peasoup, and the other etceteras that may be found in the receptacle of abominations, an ill-regulated midshipman's berth—more oceans, seas, bays, and promontories, than nature ever gave to this unhappy globe. Beneath these were discovered a pair of dark blue worsted stockings, terminated by a pair of purser's shoes—things of a hybrid breed, between a pair of cast-off slippers and the ploughman's clodhoppers, fitting as well as the former, and nearly as heavy as the latter. Now, this costume, in the depth of winter, was sufficiently light and *bizarre*; but the manner in which I had contrived to decorate my countenance soon riveted all attention to that specimen of "the human face divine," marred by the hand of man. Thanks to the expertness of Mr. Pigtop, my eyes were singularly well blackened, and the swelling of my face, particularly about the upper lip, had not yet subsided. Owing to my remaining so much, since my arrest, in the obscurity of the between-decks, and perhaps to some inflammation in my eyes, from my recent beating, I blinked upon those before me like an owl.

"As—ton—ish—ing!" said my Lord Whiffledale. "Is that Mr. Ralph Rattlin?"

"The same, my lord," said Captain Reud. "Shall I introduce him to your lordship?"

"By no manner of means—yet—for his father's sake—

really—ridiculous!—Henry, the fifth baron of Whiffledale—ah!—black eyes, filthy costume, very particularly filthy, upon my honour. How is this, Captain Reud? Of course, my present visit is not official; but, merely to satisfy my curiosity as a gentleman, how is it that your first lieutenant permits the young gentleman to so far disgrace—I *must* use the word—the service—as you see—in—in my young friend, there, with the worsted stockings, and swelled lip, and—black eyes—”

When I first made my appearance, all the captains, then and there collected, had looked upon me with anything but flattering regards; some turned up their noses, some grinned, all appeared astonished, and all disgusted. At the conclusion of this speech, I was surprised at the benignity which beamed upon me from under their variously shaped and coloured eyebrows. There was magic in the words “for his father’s sake,” and “my young friend.”

Captain Reud replied, “It is not, my lord, so much the fault of Mr. Rattlin as it would at the first blush appear to be. He himself pressed a wicked, mischievous young blackguard, who was appointed the young gentleman’s servant. Incredible as the fact may appear, my lord, he contrived, in a manner that Dr. Thompson can best explain to you, to destroy all the clothes of his young masters, merely in the wantonness of his malice. I know that Mr. Rattlin is well provided with money, and that he will take the first opportunity again to assume the garb of a gentleman; and I do assure your lordship that no man becomes it better.”

“Sir, if this youth be Mr. Rattlin—I believe it—the very oldest blood in the country flows in his veins—but, it does seem a sort of a kind of a species of miracle how a scion of that noble house should stand before me, his father’s friend, with two black eyes and a ragged jacket—there may be some mistake after all. I was going, Mr. Rattlin, to take you with me to my hotel, having matters of the utmost importance to communicate to you; but, oh no!—I am not fastidious, so we had better first have a little private conference in the after—gentlemen, will you excuse us?” bowing round—“Captain Reud will perhaps do me the favour to be of the party?”

So, into the after-cabin we three went, I burning with impatience, and speechless with agitation, supposing that the much coveted secret of my parentage would be at length unfolded to me.

Lord Whiffledale and Captain Reud being seated with their backs to the cabin-windows, and I standing before them

with the light full upon my disfigured face, I must have had a great deal more the look of a battered blackguard, being tried for a petty larceny, than a young gentleman on the eve of being acknowledged the heir to greatness by a very noble lord.

There was a pause for some minutes, during which Lord Whiffledale was preparing to be imposing, and the light of mischief began to beam with incipient insanity in Reud's eye. "Certainly," I said to myself, "he will not dare to practise one of his mad pranks upon a lord of the Admiralty!" What will not madness dare!

His lordship, having taken snuff very solemnly, and looked round him with a calm circumspection, fixing his dull eye upon me, and wagging his head, with an equable motion, slowly up and down, spoke as follows:

"There is a Providence above us all. It is seen, Mr. Rattlin, in the fall of a sparrow—it has protected our glorious constitution—it has sanctified the pillars of the state. Providence is, Mr. Rattlin—do you really know what Providence is?—I ask you the question advisedly—I always speak advisedly—I ask you, do you know what Providence is?—Do not speak—interruptions are unseemly—there are few who interrupt me. Providence, young man, has brought me on board this frigate to-day—the wind is north-easterly, what there is of it, may increase my catarrh—there is the hand of Providence in everything. I promised my most honourable friend, that I would see you as you are—how equipped, how lodged, 'how cabined, cribbed, confined.' Apt quotation!—you are cabined—you are cribbed—you are confined—*cribbed*—look at your countenance—as I said before, 'tis the hand of Providence—"

"Begging your lordship's pardon," said Reud submissively, with the dubious twinkle in his eye, "for interrupting a nobleman who is so seldom interrupted—I rather think that it was the fist of Pigtop."

"Pigtop!—Providence—my quotation. Captain Reud, I have not really the pleasure of understanding you. This young gentleman, who has been so lately under the chastising hand of Providence—"

"Pigtop's."

"Is now about to receive from that bountiful hand some of the choicest gifts it is the happiness of man to receive; rank, wealth, a father's blessing. Oh! 'tis too much—I am affected—what can I possibly do with him with those black eyes? Mr. Ralph Rattlin, you have not yet spoken to me—indeed,

how can you? What words would be sufficiently expressive of—of—what you ought to express! Captain Reud, don't you find this scene rather affecting? Young gentleman, I am here to verify you—are you fully prepared, sir, to be, as it were, verified?

"My lord, my lord, I am bursting with impatience!"

"Bursting with impatience! The scene is affecting, certainly—touching—complete, with the exception of the black eyes. What would not Miss Burney make of it in one of her admirable novels! But you might have made use of a better word than bursting—I am ready to dissolve with emotion at this tender scene—the discovery of his parentage to a tall ingenuous youth—bursting—you might have used, firstly, burning—secondly, glowing—thirdly, consuming—fourthly, raging—fifthly, dying—sixthly, there is perishing; but I will not much insist upon the last, though it is certainly better than bursting. You mean to say that you are burning, not bursting, with impatience—it is a natural feeling, it is commendable, it is worthy of a son of your most honourable father—I will faithfully report to him this filial impatience, and how eager I was to remove it. I do not say, satisfy it—a person less careful of the varieties of language would have said satisfy—an impatience satisfied is what?—a contradiction of terms; but, an impatience removed, is—is—the removal of an impatience. This interview will grow very touching. Those blackened eyes—I would that there were a green shade over them. Are you prepared to be verified?"

I bowed, fearing that any other expression of my wishes would lead to farther digression. His lordship, then putting on his spectacles, and reading from a paper, commenced thus, I, all the while, trembling with agitation:

"Are you the person who was nursed by one Rose Brandon, the wife of Joseph Brandon, by trade a sawyer?"

"I am."

"What name did you go by, when under the care of those persons?"

"Ralph Rattlin Brandon."

"Right, very good. I shall embrace him shortly—my heart yearns towards him. Were you removed to a school, by a gentleman in a plain carriage, from those Brandons?"

"I was."

"To where?"

"To Mr. Roots' academy."

"Right—a good boy, an amiable boy, he was removed to

Mr. Roots; and, having there imbibed the rudiments of a classical education, you were removed to where?"

"To a boarding-school, kept by a French gentleman at Stickenham, where, in his wife, I thought that I had found a mother—"

"Stop, we are not come to that yet, that is, too affecting—of that anon—as somebody says in some play. Have you, Captain Reud, a glass of water ready, should this amiable youth or myself feel faint during this exciting investigation?"

"Perfectly ready," said the Creole, decidedly in one of his insane fits, for he immediately skipped behind his lordship, and, jumping upon the locker, stood ready to invert a glass of water upon his nicely powdered head, containing at least three gallons, this glass being a large globe containing several curious fish, which swung, attached to the beam, directly over my interrogator.

Here was a critical situation for me! A mad captain about to blow the grampus, (*i. e.* souse), a lord of the Admiralty, that same lord, I firmly believed, about to declare himself my father. I was, in a manner, spell-bound. Afraid to interrupt the conference, I bethought me that my Lord Whiffledale would be no less my father wet or dry, and so I determined to let things take their course. So I permitted his lordship to go on with his questions, at every one of which Captain Reud, looking more like a baboon than a human being, canted the globe more and more.

"All very satisfactory, all very satisfactory, indeed! And now, Ralph, on whom have you been in the habit of drawing for your allowance while you were in the West Indies?"

"Mr. ———, of King's Bench Walk, in the Temple."

"Perfectly correct—perfectly"—(still reading.)

"Are you a well grown youth for your age?"

"I am."

"Of an interesting physiognomy?"

Here the malicious madman grinned at me in the most laughable manner, over the devoted head of the ancient lord.

"I hope you will think so, my lord, when I have recovered my usual looks."

"Ugh—hum—ha—of dark brown hair, approaching to black?"

"No."

"With intensely black eyes?"

"No"—"Yes." Mine was the negative, Captain Reud's the affirmative, spoken simultaneously.

At this crisis, his lordship had made a very proper and the-

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"I am, my lord," said the unblushing liar. "The young gentleman near you is my illegitimate brother; his mother is a beautiful lady, of the name of Causand, a most artful woman. She first contrived to poison Sir Reginald's mind with insinuations to my disfavour; and, at last, so well carried on her machinations as to drive me first from the paternal roof, and, lastly, I confess it with horror and remorse, into a course so evil as to compel me to change my name, fly from my country, and subject me to the lash at the gangway. If these documents, that I confide to your hands, and to yours only, will not remove every doubt as to the truth of my assertions, afford me but a little time, till I can send to London, and every point shall be satisfactorily cleared up."

He then placed in Lord Whiffledale's hands the papers that had been so convincing to Dr. Thompson. Captain Reud, now reduced by the presence of the good doctor to the most correct deportment, stepped forward, and assured his lordship that I, at least, was no impostor, and that, if imposition had been practised, I had been made an unconscious instrument.

"Perhaps," said his lordship, after scrutinizing the papers, and returning them to Joshua, "the young gentleman with the blackened eyes will do us the favour, in a few words, to give us his own version of the story—for, may I die consumptive, if I can tell which is the real Simon Pure!"

Placed thus in the embarrassing situation of pleading for my own identity, I found that I had very little to say for myself. I could only affirm that, although always unowned, I had been continuously cared for—and, that the bills I had drawn upon Mr. —, the lawyer in the King's Bench Walk in the Temple, had always been honoured. My lord shook his head when I had finished, diplomatically. He took snuff. He then eyed me and my adversary carefully. He now waved his head upwards and downwards, and at length opened his mouth and spoke:

"Captain Reud, I wash my hands of this business. I cannot decide. I was going to take on shore with me the legitimate and too-long neglected son of my good old friend, Sir Reginald. Where is that son? I come on board the Eos, and I ask him at your hands, Captain Reud. Is that person with the discoloured countenance my friend's son? Certainly not. Is that other person his son—a disgraced man? Knowing the noble race of my friend, I should say, certainly not. Where is Sir Ralph's son? He is not here—or, if he be here, I cannot distinguish him. I wash my hands of it—I hate mysteries. I will take neither of them to London. I

am under some *slight* obligations to Sir Reginald—and yet—I cannot decide. The weight of evidence certainly preponderates in favour of the new claimant. Captain Reud perhaps will permit him to land, and he may go up to town immediately, and have an interview with Mr. — the lawyer; and, if he can satisfy that person, he will receive from him further instructions as to his future proceedings.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

The confessions of a madman, which, nevertheless, embrace a very wise caution—Ralph gets his liberty-ticket—very needless, as he is determined henceforward to preserve his liberty—and, being treated so uncivilly as a sailor, determines to turn civilian himself.

HERE Captain Reud interrupted the speaker, and told him that Joshua was a prisoner under punishment, and waiting only for convalescence to receive the remainder of six dozen lashes. At hearing this, his lordship appeared truly shocked; and, drawing Reud aside, they conversed, for some minutes, in whispers.

At the conclusion of this conference, Captain Reud stepped forward; and, regarding Joshua with a look of much severity, he said: “Young man, for the sake of other parties, and of other interests, your errors are overlooked. Your discharge from this ship shall be made out immediately. If you are the person you claim to be, your three or four months’ pay can be of no consequence to you. Have you sufficient money to proceed to London immediately?”

“Much more than sufficient, sir.”

“I thought so. Proceed to London to the lawyer’s. If you are no impostor, I believe that a father’s forgiveness awaits you. Forget that you were ever in this ship. My clerk will make out your discharge immediately. Take care of yourself. You are watched. There is a wakeful eye upon you: if you swerve from the course laid down for you, and go not immediately to Mr. — office, be assured that you will be again in irons under the half-deck. Have I, my lord, correctly expressed your intentions?”

“Correctly, Captain Reud.”

"Joshua Daunton, get your bag ready; and in the mean time, I will give the necessary orders to the clerk. You may go."

With an ill-concealed triumph on his countenance, Joshua Daunton bowed submissively to all but myself. To me he advanced with an insulting smile and an extended hand. I shrank back loathingly.

"Farewell, brother Ralph. I told you that I should be in London before you. Will you favour me with any commands? Well—your pride is not unbecoming—I will not resent it for your father's sake: and, for his and for your sake, I will forgive the juggle that has hitherto placed the natural son—that is, I believe, the delicate paraphrase—in the station of the rightful heir. Farewell."

I made no reply: he left the cabin, and, in an hour after, the ship. I shall not advantage myself of that expression, so fully naturalized in novels, that "my feelings might be conceived, but cannot be expressed:" for they *can* be expressed easily enough—in two words, stupified indignation. After Joshua had departed, the other persons remaining in the after-cabin followed shortly after—with the exception of myself; for Reud told me to stay where I then was, until he should see me again.

In the course of an hour, Lord Whiffledale went on shore with his *cortège*; and Captain Reud returned into the after-cabin, which I had been, during his absence, disconsolately pacing. He was a little flushed with the wine he had taken, but perfectly sane. He came up to me kindly, and, placing his hands upon my shoulders, looked me fully and sorrowfully in the face. There was no wild speculation in his eyes; they looked mild and motherly. The large tear gathered in each gradually, and, at length, overflowing the sockets, slowly trickled down his thin and fallow cheeks. He then pressed his right hand heavily on the top part of his forehead, exclaiming, in a voice so low, so mournful, and so touching, that my bosom swelled at its tones, "It is here!—it is here!"

"Ralph, my good Ralph," said he, after he had seated himself, weeping all the while bitterly, "we will take leave of each other now. We are true brothers in sorrow—our afflictions are the same—you have lost your identity, and I mine. Ever since that cursed night at Aniana, John Reud's soul was loosened from his body; I have the greatest trouble to keep it fixed to my corporeal frame: it goes away, in spite of me, at times, and some other soul gets into this withered carcass, and plays me sad tricks—sad tricks, Rattlin—sad tricks. My identity is gone, and so, poor youth, is your's. We will part

friends. These tears are not all for you—they are for myself, too. I do not mind crying before you now, for it is not the true John Reud that is now weeping. You think that I have been a tyrant to you—but, I tell you, Rattlin, there is a tyrant in the ship greater than I—it is that horrible Dr. Thompson. He is plotting to take away my commission, and to get me into a madhouse—a madhouse!—oh, my God!—my God! remove from me this agony. Hath Thine awful storm no thunderbolt—Thy wave no tomb! Must I die on the straw, like a beast of burden worn to death by loathsome toil?—and so many swords to have flashed harmlessly over my head, so many balls to have whistled idly past my body! But, God's will be done! Bear yourself, my dear boy, carefully in the presence of all medical men. They have the eye of the fanged adder. You know that your identity also has been questioned; but your fate is happier than mine, for you can hear, see, touch, your double; but mine always eludes me, when I come home, after an excursion, to my own temple. But, if I were you, when I got hold of the thing that says it is, and is *not*, yourself, I would grind it, I would crush it, I would destroy it!"

"I will, so may Heaven help me at my utmost need!"

"Well said, my boy, well said—because he has no right to get himself flogged, and thus give a wretched world an opportunity of saying that Ralph Rattlin had been brought to the gangway. But do not let this cast you down. You will do well yet—while I—Oh that I had a son!—I might then escape. God bless you!—I must pray for strength of mind—strength of mind—mark me, strength of mind. Go, my good boy; if misfortunes should overtake you, and they leave me anything better than a dark cell and clanking chains, come and share it with me. Now go, (and he wrung my hands bitterly), and tell Doctor Thompson I wish to speak with him, and just hint to him how rationally and pleasantly we have been discoursing together—and remember my parting words—deport yourself warily before the doctors, carefully preserve your identity, and sometimes think on your poor captain."

This last interview with Captain Reud, for it was my last, would have made me wretched, had it not been swallowed up by deeper wretchedness of my own.

Early next morning, we weighed, and made sail for Sheerness. On anchoring in the Medway, Captain Reud went on shore; and, as I shall have no more occasion to refer to him, I shall state at once, that the very fate he so feared awaited him. Six months after he left the *Eos*, he died raving mad, in a private receptacle for the insane.

At Sheerness we were paid off. Those of the ship's company who, by the length of their service, were entitled to that grace, received a month's leave of absence, with only half their pay; in order to ensure their return, the other half being kept back. They had their passes signed—I call them passes instead of liberty-tickets—because they were overhauled by the sentries at the outposts of Sheerness, as if, in landing, they had found themselves in a town in an enemy's country. My leave was also for one month. Instead of drawing my pay at Sheerness, I took the pay-ticket with me, in order to present it at Somerset House, when I should arrive in London.

As I went over the side of the *Eos* for the last time, I was tempted to shake the dust off my feet, for, of a surety, it had lately been an accursed abode to me. I parted from all my shipmates and messmates without a greeting. I was indignant at some, dissatisfied with all. They had, in my opinion, too easily listened to the varnished tales of a common cheat. They went east, and west, and north, and south; and few of them I ever again met—and those few, with one single exception, I either shunned or repelled.

In order entirely to elude all observation from my late companions, I abandoned everything I had on board, not much worth, truly, with the exception of my sextant and telescope; and took on shore with me only the clothes (miserable they were), in which I stood. I went to no hotel or inn; but, seeing a plain and humble houses in which there were lodgings to let for single men, I went and hired a little apartment. I took things leisurely and quietly. I was now fully determined to discover my parentage; and, after that event, entirely to be governed by circumstances, as to my future course of life, and the resuming of the naval profession. The old couple, in whose house I was for the present located, were as orderly and uninquisitive as I could wish. The man was a superannuated and pensioned dockyard mate.

My first operations were sending for a tailor, hatter, and those other architects so essential in building up the outward man. The costume I now chose was as remote from official as could be made. I provided myself with one complete suit only, leaving the rest of my wardrobe to be completed in London.

Knowing that I had an active and intelligent enemy who had two days the start of me, I was determined to act with what I thought caution. I had more than a half-year's stipend due to me. I accordingly drew for it upon the lawyer,

nearly £75, intimating to him, at the same time, by letter, my arrival in England, and asking if he had any instructions as to my future disposal. This letter was answered by return of post, written with all the brevity of business, stating that no such instructions had been received, and enclosing an order on the Sheerness Bank for the money.

So far, all was highly satisfactory. It proved two things; first, that Joshua Dauntton had not yet carried his machinations in the quarter from which arose the supplies; and, secondly, that I should now have considerable funds where with to prosecute my researches.

In the space of three days, behold me dressed in the costume of the period—blue coat, broad yellow buttons, yellow waistcoat with ditto, white corduroy continuations, tied with several strings at the knees, and topped boots. It was then the reign of the “bloods” and the “ruffians,” more ferocious species of coxcombs than our dandies, and much more annoying. They wore a number of white kerchiefs round the neck, and a knotted and crooked stick was usually carried in the so as generally to bury the chin in them almost to the upper lip; hand, or knowingly twisted round the right arm. The hat was high and conical, like that of the present French republican. As to their manners, their walk was a swagger, their look an impudence, and their conversation a tissue of oaths. They were rude to the men upon principle, and careless of the ladies in practice, drunkards by profession, and, being sworn enemies to lavender, they drew their perfumes from the storehouse of Bacchus, and despised the laboratory of Flora. Like one of those it was my ambition to make myself look. I conclude that I was tolerably successful; for, as I occasionally walked about the streets of Sheerness, I continually met some of the late crew of the Eos, but never, on their part, with any signs of recognition.

Poor fellows!—more than half of them never got beyond the precincts of Sheerness. For a week after their discharge, numbers of them were found at all hours, rolling, or lying, about the streets, in all phases of drunkenness, and, in all degrees, approaching to actual nudity. He who took a week to squander his three years' earnings, was dilatory—three days was the average period; whilst one, more than usually blessed with the genius of despatch, contrived to get ruined in three hours, and was snugly on board the guard-ship in the fourth. The first hour found him beastly drunk; the second, robbed and stripped to his banyan; the third, turned out in this state into the snow-covered streets; and the fourth, in

mere pity, taken on board the guard-ship in a state of insensibility.

By all this demoralization and this great expenditure, nobody ever benefits, but the Jews and the keepers of public-houses. The ladies who first rob the seamen are always wretchedly poor. The pawnbroker, the publican, and the Jew, share the spoils between them. During the late war, many a vast fortune has been picked up in this shabby manner. It is a pity some means cannot be devised to make Jack almost as prudent as he is brave. More liberty on shore would, perhaps, teach him how to make better use of it.

Drunk or sober, my late shipmates knew me not, at which I was extremely well pleased. But, notwithstanding my excellent management—excellent, at least, in my own opinion—there was one eye continually upon me, though, at the time, I knew it not.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ralph finds everywhere great changes—Gives way to his feelings, and makes a fool of himself—This Chapter will be found either the worst or the best of Ralph's confessions, according to the feelings of the reader.

HAVING stayed one week at Sheerness, and laid down my plan for future action, I started in the passage-boat for Chatham. I don't know whether any Margate-hoys are now in existence. Probably not, being all puffed away by steam. This passage-boat was a similar vessel in construction; but the company were like, what we consider will be the case in the kingdom of Heaven, a mixture of all classes. The cabin was very full—sailors and their wives, marines, soldiers, dock-yard artificers, Jews, fishermen, peripatetic venders of muscles—all upon an equality. Indeed, the only method to be exclusive, consisted in wrapping one's-self up in silence and a large cloak. This method I adopted. Silence on my part and the continued hubbub on the part of my shipmates, produced sleep—but my sleep was unsound and continually broken. There was not much room for recumbency. I found it, however; and placed the only luggage that I had, a small parcel, covered with brown paper, under my head as a pillow. The

parcel contained my logs, and my certificates, and a single change of linen. Very providentially, I had placed my pay-ticket with my bank notes, in my pocket-book.

Once, as I opened my eyes at the explosion of an oath more loud than usual, methought I saw the sodden and white-complexioned face of Joshua Dauntton hanging closely over mine. I started up, and rubbed my eyes, but the vision had fled. I was determined to be watchful; and, with this determination in full activity, I again fell asleep: nor was I once more properly awakened until we had arrived at Chatham, alongside of the landing-place. When I had roused myself up, to my consternation, I discovered that my pillow was no where to be found. Many of the passengers had already gone their ways, and those that remained knew nothing about me or my packet. Indeed, I only drew suspicions on myself, as my paucity of baggage and the pretensions of my dress were decidedly at variance. The gentleman in top-boots and with the brown paper parcel seemed ridiculous enough. Seeing how ineffectual noise was, I held my peace, now that I had nothing else to hold; got on the outside of the first coach for London; and, by ten at night, found myself in the coffee-room of the White Horse, in Fetter Lane.

I ordered supper—I ordered wine—and, after I had discussed these, I ordered a bed. But the waiters were suspicious of the solvency of “the gentleman with no luggage.” So, instead of the attendant bringing me the boot-jack, the fellow, placing one hand on my cloak that hung over the partition of the coffee-box, placed the bill before me with the other, saying that it was invariably the custom, at the White Horse, for gentlemen to pay for everything as they had it. To this invariable custom, I replied that I could have no objection, but that I did a little object to pay for what I had had twice over; so pulling out a handful of gold, I asked to speak to the master.

The man was exceedingly civil, and acknowledged, at once, that the charges were exorbitant; so, whilst he was reducing them with the pen in his hand, he reminded me that he ought to consider risk, especially as I had arrived with no luggage.

“But my appearance?” said I, a little nettled.

“Is,” said he, “or rather was, put down in the bill.”

Now, as I perceived, by my landlord’s manner, that he had no wish to be offensive, I declined any farther discussion on appearances; but I did not fail to make some salutary re-

flections upon them, upon which I was determined to act next morning.

I must necessarily be minute in detailing the circumstances that were now leading me on so rapidly to the grand catastrophe of my life; and, if I dwell less upon my feelings and more upon my actions, it must be remembered that events are of more consequence than reflections, if the former be properly studied. The next morning, when I arose, it was my birthday, the 14th of February; and I stood at mine inn, a being perfectly isolated. But I was not idle: on descending into the coffee-room, I procured the Court Guide: but my most anxious scrutiny could discover no such person among the baronets as Sir Reginald Rattlin. Paying my bill, I next went to Somerset House, and drew my pay; I then repaired to the aristocratic mansion of Lord Whiffledale, in Grosvenor Square. "Not at home," and "in the country for some time," were the surly answers of the indolent porter.

It was a day of disappointments. The lawyer who cashed my bills was civil and constrained. To all my entreaties first, and to all my leading questions afterwards, he gave me cold and evasive answers. He told me that he had received no farther instructions concerning me; reiterated his injunctions that I should not endanger the present protection that I enjoyed, by endeavouring to explore what it was the intention of those on whom I depended to keep concealed; and he finally wished me a good morning, and was almost on the point of handing me out of his office.

But I would not be so repelled. I became impassioned and loud; nor would I depart until he assured me, on his honour, that he knew almost as little of the secret as myself, and that he was only the agent of an agent, never having yet had any communication with the principal, whose name, even, he assured me, he did not know.

I had now nearly exhausted the day. The intermingling mists of the season and the heavy smoke of the town were now shrouding the streets in a dense obscurity. Then the nights of gas were not. Profoundly ignorant of the intricacy of the streets of the metropolis, I was completely at the mercy of the hackney-coachmen, and they made me buy it extremely dear. Merely from habit, I again repaired to the White Horse, and concluded my nineteenth natal day in incertitude, solitude, and misery. During the ensuing night, I scarcely slept. The depression of my spirits was horrible. I sighed for the breaking of the day, and it seemed to be an event that was never again to happen.

To Stickenham—yes, I would go there immediately. But

the resolve gave no exulting throb to my bosom. I doubted everything—I dreaded everything. For more than three years, I had heard no tidings of its once-loved inhabitants. Besides, my heart sickened when I remembered the insinuations of Dauntton, that my beautiful schoolmistress was not the person who had any claim to call me son.

As it did not actually rain, and the place was but seven miles from London, I determined to walk thither immediately after breakfast. As I was the "gentleman without luggage," my motions were sufficiently unconstrained. I procured the necessary directions to enable me to free myself from London, and, when over Blackfriars Bridge, my memory supplied the rest of the road. I had often traversed it when a happy schoolboy.

As I walked rapidly along, my feelings assumed a different hue every hundred yards. Now, I would figure to myself the rapturous embrace, the tearful eye, the hearty welcome, and all the holy joy of the Prodigal's return; and then, the surmise would come over me that my life had been a mistake, that hearts had grown cold, and that studied civility would be the mask under which estrangement would strive to hide its cruelty. But, as I left the town behind me, the atmosphere cleared up, the sun shone out brightly; even a few hardy birds, by their chirping, seemed to understand that the day before had been blessed by St. Valentine. So, with a lighter heart, I struggled vigorously up the steep hill, at the brow of which I should be able to discover my own dear play-ground, the romantic heath that lay before it, and the elegant white and rough-cast front of the school, in which happiness had first been mine, where I had been loved by all, and idolized by one.

One bound, and I was on the brow of the hill, and the vast scene lay extended before me. A sharp cry of anguish broke from my lips. Where was the heathery and wild common, so beautiful in the wantonness of Nature? Alas! where was it? The spirit of Mammon had breathed balefully over the expanse. It was broken up into miserable pittances. The plough had gone over its pleasant walks; the bituminous and oppressive stench of the brick-field had displaced the living fragrance of the wild thyme; the weary foot was confined to one gravelled road. Mud cabins were profusely spread over the surface; and, with cultivation, had come sordid poverty, and dirt, and toil, and squalor. I could have wept at this change—why need I be ashamed of my feelings?—I did weep. I received this alteration as a sorrowful presage. I asked my labouring heart, if three short years were sufficient thus to

alter the lovely face of Nature so hideously what I might expect in man. My heart answered, Change. But the cup of my misery was not yet full. The first arrow only, as yet, had pierced.

I came to that spot, so consecrated to my memory by bright skies and brighter faces; the spot where I had so often urged the flying ball and marshalled the mimic army—it was there that I stood; and I asked of a miserable, half-starved woman, 'where was the play-ground of my youth?' and she showed me a "brick-field."

I thought of the Egyptian bondage, and the sons and daughters of Judah, and my heart was exceeding sad.

I walked a few paces further, and asked for the school-house of my happiest days—and one pointed out to me a brawling ale-house. I saw the depraved reeling out, and the beggarly and the hungry standing round the doors. It was a bitter change. It was to me, as if hope after hope was dying beneath my gaze. My step tottered, my voice faltered. It was nearly choked with emotion, when I asked of another where was now my old light-hearted, deeply learned, French school-master, Monsieur Cherfeuil. He had gone back to France.

The *émigrés* had been recalled by Napoleon; he had taken with him the fortune he had made in England—and the man cursed him. I was too dejected to avenge the insult, and I turned away from the wretch loathingly.

I looked to the right and to the left, and truly may I say that I saw my rural and my household gods shattered around me. At length, my eye rested on a bench, that had been placed for years between the two tall elms, the only two trees on this gentle hill; and I hastened to seat myself upon it. The spoilers had left that. My anguish was intense; I cursed in my heart the speculators that had destroyed the pleasant oasis in my thoughts. Each succeeding reflection came upon me more despondingly than the last. All was disappointment and gloom around and within me. I gazed and gazed on the desecration before me, until my very eye-balls seemed to participate in the agony of my heart. At length, unable longer to bear the hateful view, I placed my handkerchief before my eyes for a space—and then, and there, on my old play-ground, and amidst my old and inviolated associations, I prayed to God for strength to bear up against the many griefs that were devouring me. I had not prayed for years before—and, yet—depraved and cast away as I had been—I was strengthened.

There was another question that I dreaded, yet burned to ask—I need not state how fearful it was to me, since it was

to learn the fate of her whom I had honoured, and loved, and hailed, as my mother—the beautiful and the kind Mrs. Cherfeuil. I conjectured that she, too, had gone to France with her husband, and the idea was painful to me. When I lifted up my head after my silent prayer, I found that a little girl, of perhaps twelve years of age, had nestled herself close to my side. She was evidently in very humble circumstances, yet particularly clean, and very good-looking. She was innocently endeavouring to attract my notice. Upon looking at her with more attention, I believed that I recollected her features. I resolved to speak to her, and, if she were the person whom I supposed her to be, to draw from her all the information that I was so anxious to acquire.

“There have been great alterations here, my good girl.”

“Very great, indeed, sir—they have ruined father and mother.”

“Who are your father and mother—and where are they?”

“Father is gone to sea, and mother is in the workhouse. Before they enclosed the common, father cut furze and dug gravel, and kept us all with a good bellyful and a warm back. They said that they enclosed it for the good of the poor—but the gentry have got it all, and nobody knows where the poor men’s lots are. At first, the poor of the parish wouldn’t stand it, so they went a-rioting, and broke down the fences, and turned in their cows, and their sheep, and their geese, as they did before. But, the law was too strong for them. Old Edgely, the leader, was transported for life; my father got off by being allowed to go on board of a man-of-war; my brothers are all gone this way and that; and mother, being oldish, is now settled in the workhouse. It has never been happy Stickenham since.”

“Your name, my dear, is Susan Archer.”

“Bless me, so it is, sir!”

“And you seem a very intelligent little girl, indeed.”

“Yes, I have had a good deal of book-learning, but all that is past and gone now. When Mrs. Cherfeuil lived in that house, she took care that we should always have a home of our own, fire in the grate, and a loaf in the cupboard—she had me sent to school—but now she is gone.”

“Gone!—where—with her husband?”

“Don’t you know, sir?” said she, rising from her seat with a quiet solemnity, that made me shudder with dreadful anticipations. “If you will come with me, I will show you.”

I dared not ask the awful question, “Is she dead?” I took my gentle guide by the hand, and suffered her to lead me slowly through the village. Neither of us spoke. I obsti-

nately refused to swallow the cup that was offered to my lips. I cheated my heart as long as I was able. She is going, I said to myself, to lead me where I shall find her in comparative poverty—sheltered perhaps by some humble friend. She may be even sick, bed-ridden, dying—but cold, dead, that form that I left in the radiance of matronly beauty, the prey of loathsome corruption—it is unnatural, impossible!—and, consoling myself thus, we slowly passed through the village.

I recognised several of my old friends, but they knew me not. I had left the place a boy, and I returned, at least in appearance, a man. In my habiliments I had nothing of the sailor about me. They looked upon me, and knew me not, and I was exceedingly content. I was in no humour to satisfy idle inquiry—I wished for no companion but my own thoughts, no adviser but my own impetuous feelings.

We passed through the village, I keeping up obstinately my forced delusion that I was about to be soon in the presence of one who could solve the mystery that was crushing my young energies, and fast destroying all that was good and healthy in my mind. I planned how I should act, what I should say; and I even began to revel in the thoughts of the maternal endearments she would bestow upon me. But the thunder-cloud of misery broke upon me suddenly, and enveloped me at once in its despairing blackness. We had almost attained to the end of the hamlet, when my sad guide gently plucked me by the arm to turn down to the right.

"No," said I, tremulously, "that is not the way; we must go forward. That lane leads to the churchyard."

"And to Mrs. Cherfeuille."

"Go on, and regard me not."

In another minute we were both sitting on a newly-made grave, the little girl weeping in the innocent excess of that sorrow that brings so soon its own sweet relief.

My at first low and almost inaudible murmurs gradually grew more loud and more impassioned. At last they aroused the attention of my weeping companion, and she said to me artlessly, "It is of no use taking on in this way, sir; she can never speak up from the grave. She is in heaven now; and God does not permit any of His blessed saints to speak to us sinners below."

"You are quite right, my good girl," said I, ashamed of this betrayal of my emotion. "It is very foolish indeed to be talking to the dead over their damp graves, and not at all proper. But, I have a great fancy to stay here a little while by myself. Pray go and wait for me at the end of the lane."

I will not keep you long, and I have something to say to you."

"I will do as you tell me, sir, most certainly. I will tell you all about her death, for I was a sort of help to the nurse. I know you now, sir, and thought I knew you from the first. May the God that my good friend first taught me to revere make this stroke light to you!"

I shall not repeat the extravagances that I uttered when alone. I was angry with myself and with all the world; and I fear that I exasperated myself with the thought that I did not sufficiently feel the grief with which I strove to consecrate my loss. I remember, I concluded my rhapsody thus:

"Again I call upon you by the sacred name of mother—for such you were—and no other will my heart ever acknowledge. I adjure you to hear me swear that I will have all the justice done to your memory that man can do; and may we never meet in those realms where only the injured find redress, if I fail to scatter this sacred earth in token of dishonour upon the head of him who has dishonoured you—were he even my own father! It is an oath. May it be recorded, should that record be used as my sentence of death!"

Having made this rash and impious vow, the effect of over-excitement, I tore a considerable portion of the earth from the grave, and, folding it in my handkerchief, I knotted it securely, and placed it round my heart next to my skin, like those belts worn by the Roman Catholics as instruments of penance.

Now, in my maturer years, I see the folly and am ashamed of my extravagance; but, at the time, I actually thought it a virtue. I had no friendly counsellor near me—none who could acquaint me that, in this rash oath, I was binding myself to violate the laws of man, whilst I was outraging the ordinance of the Deity. Notwithstanding all this folly, my love, my grief, and my anger, were all sincere. I had even a strong superstitious feeling about me, that, whilst I was girded by this sacred dust, I should bear a charmed life. Such are the wildness and folly of an ill-regulated imagination.

With a wish for something very like the shedding of blood in my heart, and with a fervent prayer in my imagination and on my lips, I left Mrs. Cherfeuil's humble grave, and joined my companion.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ralph meets with old friends and old enemies, and nearly has his grog stopped, whilst listening to a very pleasant discussion, to which he is an unwilling party—He has a something to thank romance for.

I SHALL here be very rapid in my narrative. I wish to hurry all over these distressing points of my biography. I feel now, and I even felt then, that there was something ridiculous, as well as excruciating, in them. I suspected that I was not acting naturally—that I was endeavouring to model myself too much upon the character of a hero of romance: and—must I confess it?—in one little half hour, I found my belt of vengeance so cold and so inconvenient, that I heartily wished I was well rid of it: it is a miserable confession, a sad falling off in my heroics; but the oath that I had voluntarily and so solemnly taken prevented me from ridding myself of the disgusting incumbrance.

Although my history has been most romantic, I was never formed for the hero of a romance. Pushed aside as I have been from the well-trodden paths of common-place life, I have been always most eager to regain them. I am capable of great exertions upon great emergencies; but I detest a repetition of them; I abhor trouble; and have a very horror of anything approaching to bodily pain. Why did I then subject myself to such an annoyance? Because I was a fool, and a watchful Providence was so gracious as to work out safety for me from my very folly.

Il faut manger. In a young and healthy subject, the more vigorous the sorrow, alas! it too often happens the more unconquerable the appetite. Full as I was of high resolve of vengeance, and of a just indignation against oppression, it was upon an empty stomach. The mortifications of the mind I could endure; those of the body I could never long sustain. Contrition, the most sincere and the most intense, would never have induced me to become a monk of La Trappe. So, with a bursting heart, the little girl by my side, and a keen idea of the necessity of digestion, I entered the first inn, and ordered an ample provision of beef-steaks. These were grovelling aspirations most certainly, but, who shall say that they were not natural?

Really, just at that time, I had so little taste for anything but my approaching repast, that I missed the opportunity of effect that might have been produced, by the bereaved son

weeping in unison with the child who had lost her friend : it would have been pretty and pathetic—but I was too hungry, so I only gave her a shilling as an earnest of my future bounty, and told her to call again in a couple of hours, in order that she might unfold all that she knew of a subject so deeply interesting to myself.

I sorrowed and I dined heartily. The girl came, and I prepared to return to town. Let it not be supposed, notwithstanding my sins of appetite, that I did not feel acutely when I heard her simple relation. It appeared that all was smiles, and happiness, and sunshine, around Mrs. Cherfeuil ; when a person made his appearance, by the description of whom I at once recognised that fiend, Dauntton. All domestic happiness then ceased for the poor lady ; rumours of the worst nature got abroad ; her little French husband, instead of being, as for twelve years before he had been, her shadow, her slave, and her admirer, became outrageous and cruel, and, after the horrid word bigamy had been launched against her, she never after held up her head.

She sickened and died. Nor did Dauntton succeed in his plans of extorting money—but his scheme was infinitely more deep and more hellish. He had, *but not till after her death*, declared himself to be her son. This, instead of having any effect upon the outraged widower, only made him more eager to drive the impostor from his presence ; and, the opportunity offering itself to leave the spot now so hateful to him, and the country that had sheltered him, and in which he had grown so rich, for ever, he availed himself of it eagerly. This account did not aggravate my implacable feelings against this Dauntton ; for my hate was beyond the capability of increase. I detested him with all my heart, and all my strength, and all my soul. The feeling next powerful to this was to unravel my mystery and his ; for now I felt assured in some subtle manner that they were intimately connected.

Those who look upon this as a novel, as a tissue of well or ill-devised fictions, are mistaken. Were it so, characters would not rise, make a few unimportant speeches, and perform a few unimportant acts, and then disappear from the stage for ever. The writer would not so exhaust his materials, so multiply his characters. He would have brought only those persons before the eye of the public who would answer some end toward the developement of the whole—they would be all concentrated on the boards in the last scene. Poetical justice, the only justice existing in perfection at present, would be done to all parties, and the curtain drop upon the reader, the hero married to the constant and beautiful he-

roine, and nothing to be imagined for them both but a long period of mundane happiness. But, as this is nothing less or more than an actual biography, in which nought is changed but names, and nothing falsified excepting a few localities, the reader must expect nothing of the concordance, and the satisfactory results, of Romance—no sustained course of grand action, but all the vicissitudes of every-day life, in which the lofty is continually tripped up by the ridiculous, and the marvellous may seem exaggerated, merely because it is strictly true.

It is your actual facts that puzzle your critics with the idea of the impossible. How absurd, they will say, to suppose that a mere youth could, in these matter-of-fact days, go and utter imprecations over the grave of his supposed mother, belt round his body a portion of the cold earth of her grave, and the mad act be afterwards the means of preserving his life, when it ought to have killed him by an attack of pleurisy—they would repeat, it is, altogether, out of the course of nature, and utterly impossible: to all which I have only calmly to reply that it is positively true, and it is related because it is as strange as true.

After hearing all that the little wench had to discover, and rewarding her, I proceeded alone to wander over the spots that were once so dear to me. In this melancholy occupation, when the cold mists of the early evening fell, I continued heaping regret upon regret, until a more miserable being, short of being impelled to suicide, could not have trod the earth. About five, it began to grow dark; and, weary both in mind and body, I commenced climbing the long hill that was the boundary of the common, on my return to London.

On the Surrey side of the hill, for its apex separated it from another county, the descent was most precipitous—so much so, that it is now wholly disused as a road for carriages; and not only was it precipitous, but excessively contorted, the bends sometimes running at right angles with each other. High banks, clothed with impervious hedges, and shadowed by tall trees, made the road both dank and dark; and, at the time that I was passing, or, rather, turning round one of the elbows of this descent, a sturdy fellow, with a heavy cudgel, followed at some distance by a much smaller man, accosted me in a rude tone of voice, by bawling out—

“I say, you sir, what’s o’clock?”

“Go about your business, and let me pass.”

“Take that for your civility!”—and, with a severe blow with his stick, he laid me prostrate. I was not stunned, but felt very sick, and altogether incapable of rising. In this

state, I determined to feign stupefaction, so I nearly closed my eyes, and lay perfectly still. The huge vagabond then placed his knee upon my chest, and called out to his companion—

"I say, Mister, come and see if this here chap's the right un."

The person called to came up; and, immediately after, through my eyelashes, I beheld the diabolical white face of Dauntun. It was so dark, that to recognize me, he was obliged to place his countenance so close to mine that his hot breath burned against my cheek. He was in a passion of terror, and trembled as if in an access of ague.

"It is," said he, whilst his teeth chattered. "Is he stunned?"

"Mister, now I take that as an insult. D'ye think that John Gowles need strike such a strip of a thing as that ere twice?"

"Hush!—how very, very cold it is! Where is your knife? Will you do it?"

"Most sartainly not. There—he's at your mercy—I never committed murder yet—no, no, must think of my precious soul. A bargain's a bargain—my part on't is done."

"Gowles, don't talk so loud. I can't bear the sight of blood—and, oh God!—of this blood—it would spirt upon my hand. Strike him again over the head—he breathes heavily—strike him!"

"No," said the confederate, sullenly. "Tell ye—u'll have neither art nor part in this ere murder."

During this very interesting conference, I was rallying all my energetics for one desperate effort, intending, however, to wait for the uplifted knife, to grasp it, in order that I might turn the weapon against the breast of one assassin, and then use it as a defence against the other.

"Would to God," said the villain, adding blasphemy to concerted murder—"would to God that my hand was spared this task? Give me the knife now. Where shall I strike him?—I have no strength to drive it into him far."

"Tell ye, Mister, u'll have nought to do with the murder—but u'd advise thee to bare his neck, and thrust in the point just under his right ear."

"Hush! Will it bleed much?"

"Damnably!"

"Horrible!—horrible! Do you think the story about Cain and Abel is true?"

"As God is in heaven!"

"Then, my brother's blood will turn everything to scarlet as long as I live. Can't it be done without blood?"

"I'll have nothing to do with the murder. But, Mister, if so be as you are so craven-hearted, take your small popper, and send a ball right into his heart. It is a gentleman's death, and will make the prettiest small hole imaginable, and bleed none to signify. But, mind ye, this ere murder's all your own."

At this critical moment, as I was inhaling a strong breath, in order to invigorate my frame for instant exertion, I heard two or three voices in the distance carolling out, in a sort of disjointed chorus—

"Many droll sights I've seen,
But I wish the wars were over."

"Now or never," said Joshua, producing and cocking his pistol. I leaped up on my legs in an instant, and, seizing the weapon, which was a small tool, manufactured for a gentleman's pocket, by the barrel with my left hand, and this amiable specimen of fraternity by the right, the struggle of an instant ensued. The muzzle of the pistol was close against my breast when my adversary discharged it. I felt the sharp hard knock of the ball upon my chest, and the percussion, for the moment, took away my breath, but my hold upon the villain's throat was unrelaxed. The gurgling of suffocation became audible to his brutal companion.

"Ods sneckens!" said the brute, "but this ere murdered man is throttling my Mister in his death-throe."

Down at once came his tremendous cudgel upon my arm. I released my grip, and again fell to the earth.

"He's a dead man," said Gowles; "run for your life! Mind, Mister, I had neither art nor part in this ere—"

And they were almost immediately out of sight and out of hearing.

At the report of the pistol, the jolly choristers struck up prestissimo with their feet. They were standing round me just as the retreating feet of my assassins had ceased to resound in the stillness of the darkness.

"A voice," which I immediately knew to be that of my old adversary, the master's-mate, Pigtop accosted me.

"Holloa, shipmate!—fallen foul of a pirate, mayhap—haven't slipped your wind, ha' ye, messmate?"

"No; but I believe my arm's broken, and I have a pistol-ball between my ribs."

"Which way did the lubbers sheer off? Shall we clap on sail, and give chase?"

"It is of no use. I know one of them well. They shall not escape me."

"Why, I know that voice. Yes—no—damn me—it must be Ralph Rattlin—it beant, sure—and here on his beam-ends, a shot in his hull, and one of his spars shattered. I'd sooner have had my grog watered all my life than this should have fallen out."

"You have not had your grog watered this evening, Pigtop," said I rising, assisted by himself and his comrades. "I don't feel much hurt, after all."

"True, true, shipmate. But we must clap a stopper over all. Small shot in the chest are bad messmates. We must make a tourniquet of my skysail here."

So, without heeding my cries of pain, he passed his handkerchief round my breast; and, by the means of twisting his walking-stick in the knot, he hove it so tight, that he not only stopped all effusion of blood, but almost all my efforts at breathing. My left hand still held the discharged pistol, which I gave into the custody of Pigtop. Upon farther examination, I found that there was no fracture of the bone of my arm; and that, all things considered, I could walk tolerably well. However, I still felt a violent pain in my chest, attended with difficulty of breathing, at the least accelerated pace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ralph appears before a magistrate, and proves to be more frightened than hurt, though frightened as little as a veritable hero should be—A great deal of fuss about a little dust, not kicked up, but finally laid down.

WE got on, nevertheless, Pigtop shaking his head very dolefully, whenever I paused to recover breath.

We entered the first house that we came to; that of an agricultural labourer. We told our adventure, and the good man immediately proceeded to acquaint the patrol and the constable. I was anxious to examine the nature of my wound, to which my old messmate would not listen for a moment. He was particularly sorry that he saw no blood, from which symptom he argued the worst—looking upon me as a dead man, being certain that I was bleeding inwardly.

I decided for a post-chaise, that I might hasten to town and make my depositions; for I was determined to let loose the hounds of the law after my dastardly enemies, without the loss of a moment. The chaise was soon procured; and, much

to the satisfaction of Pigtop, we drove directly to Bow Street—the good fellow having a firm persuasion that the moment his make-shift tourniquet was withdrawn, I should breathe my last. I had no such direful apprehensions.

When we arrived at the office, the worthy magistrate was on the point of retiring. The clatter of the chaise driving rapidly up to the door, and the exaggerated report of the post-boy, heralded us in with some *eclat*. The magistrate, when he heard that it was a case of murder, very well disguised his regret at the postponement of his dinner.

Mr. Pigtop insisted upon supporting me, although I could walk very well—quite as well as himself, considering his potations: and insisted also upon speaking, although, without self-flattery, I could speak much better than himself. He was one of the old school of seamen, and could not talk out of his profession. Accordingly, he was first sworn. We will give the commencement of his deposition verbatim, as he is one of a class that is fast disappearing from the face of the waters.

"If you please, your worship, I and my two consorts that are lying-to in my wake, after having taken in our wood and water at Woolwich, we braced up sharp, bound for London."

"What do you mean by your wood and water?" said the magistrate.

"Our bub and grub—here's a magistrate for you! (aside to me). Your worship down to our bearings. So, as Bill here said, as how we were working Tom Cox's traverse—your worship knows what that means, well enough."

"Indeed, sir, I don't."

"It's the course the lawyers will take when they make sail for heaven. I can see, in the twinkling of a purser's dip, that your worship is no lawyer."

"This, sir, is the first time that any one has had the impertinence to tell me so."

"Well, well, no offence, I hope, your worship!—there is no accounting for taste, as the monkey said when he saw the cat pitch into the tar barrel:" and then the worthy witness embarked into a very irrelevant digression about land-sharks. The magistrate, however was patient and sensible, and at length overcame the great difficulty arising from his never having been to sea, and Pigtop never having been to law.

His deposition, having been translated into the vulgar tongue, out of nautical mysticisms, was duly sworn to; yet not without an interruption when the magistrate heard that it was supposed that I had the pistol-ball still somewhere in my body—he wishing me to be examined by a surgeon immediately. Mr. Pigtop was opposed to this, lest I should die upon the spot; but I gave the magistrate more satisfaction

by telling him I had good reason to suppose that the ball had not penetrated deeply.

I was the last examined; and I almost electrified Pigtop when I deposed that I knew well the person of my murderous assaulter, and that it was Joshua Dauntton.

At this announcement, my quondam messmate slapped his hand upon his knee with a violence that echoed through the court—grinned—then looked profoundly serious; but made me very thankful for holding his peace, and shaking his head most awfully. When I proceeded to give a very accurate description of this wretch's person, looks of understanding passed between three or four of the principal runners, who were attentively listening to the proceedings. When this business was concluded, the magistrate said to me, "The young man who has committed this outrage upon your person, we have strong reason to believe, is amenable to the laws for other crimes. He has eluded our most active officers; and, it was supposed, that he had left the kingdom. It appears now that he has returned. You have had a most providential escape. This pistol will give us a good clue. There is no doubt but that shortly we shall be able to give a good account of him. Let me now advise you, Mr. Rattlin, to have your hurt examined. Come into my private room; a surgeon will be here in an instant."

Pigtop and I were then ushered into a room on one side of the office. I looked extremely foolish—almost, in fact, as confused as if I had been charged with an offence. The surgeon soon made his appearance; but, in the short interval, the magistrate had begun to thrust home with his questions as to who I was, what were my intentions, and the probable motives of Dauntton's attempt on my life. All these I parried as well as I could, without letting him know anything of the supposed consanguinity between myself and the culprit—his motive I accounted for, as revenge for some real or imaginary insult inflicted by me when we were on board the *Eos*.

Upon my persisting to refuse, for some time, to strip, that the wound might be examined, the magistrate began to look grave, and the surgeon hinted that it was, perhaps, as well not to seek for what was not to be found. The dread of being looked upon as an impostor overcame my shame at the *exposé* of my romantic weakness. Poor Pigtop had alarms upon totally other grounds. He watched with painful anxiety the unwinding of his tourniquet, ready to receive me dying into his arms. His surprise was greater, I fear me, than his joy, when he discovered no signs of bleeding when his handkerchief was removed.

"What, in the name of pharmacy, is this?" said the sur-

geon, detaching my belt of earth; "but here is the ball, however—it has more than broken the skin; and there has been a good deal of blood extravasated, but it has been absorbed by the mould in this handkerchief. By whatever means this singular bandage was placed where I found it, you may depend upon it, young gentleman, that it has saved your life."

"I presume, Mr. Rattlin, that you are a Catholic?" said the magistrate, "and that you have been a very naughty boy—if so, the penance that your confessor has enjoined you has been miraculously providential, and I shall think better of penances for the rest of my life."

The lie so temptingly offered for my adoption that I was about to make use of. But, when I reflected from whence I had collected that sacred earth, I dared not profane it by a falsehood. So, with a faltering voice, and my eyes filling with tears, I thus addressed the magistrate.

"Do not laugh at me, sir, do not despise me. I will tell you the exact truth. I am a silly, romantic boy, that am too apt to give way unduly to sudden emotions, and, perhaps, false feelings. I returned, sir, after being three years away, to a home which I left a mere child, and where I also had left a dear, sweet, good mother, in beauty, in happiness, and in health. When I asked for my home, they showed me the house of a stranger—for my mother—and they led me to a newly-made grave. In a fit of enthusiasm, I gathered up the earth from over her body and bound it round my bosom. I did it, and may God pardon me! with wicked thoughts in my head. But I am not sorry for this insane act, for, methinks, the honoured lady has stretched forth her hand from the grave, and placed it before the heart of her son that she so loved when living."

"I think so too," said the magistrate, much moved. "But, my young friend, these superstitious fancies and acts are best omitted. I am sure that you do not need this earth to remember your mother. Besides, it must be prejudicial to your health to carry it about your person, to say nothing of the singularity of the deed—take my advice, and convey it carefully to the nearest consecrated ground, and there reverently deposit it. We will preserve this ball with the pistol, and now let Mr. Ankens dress your slight wound. We must see you well through this affair, and the Admiralty must prolong your leave of absence, if it be necessary. I should wish to know more of you as a private individual—there is my card. You are a very good lad for honouring your mother. Fare ye well."

With many compliments from the surgeon also, and a roller or two of cotton round my chest, we mutually took leave of

each other—the gentleman, very considerably, refusing the guinea that I tendered him.

Having discharged the post-chaise, Mr. Pigtop, his two companions, and myself, left the office, I bearing in my hand the handkerchief nearly filled with mould. What did I do with it—saturated as it was with my blood, and owing as I did my life to it? Perhaps, sweet and gentle lady, you think that I preserved it in a costly vase, over which I might weep, or had it made up by some fair hands systematically in a silken belt, and still wore it next my heart, or, at least, that I placed it in a china flower-vase, and planted a rose tree therein, which I watered daily by my tears. Alas! for the lovers of the romantic, I did none of these. I told you before, all my incidents turned out mere matter-of-fact affairs. Like a good boy, I did as the magistrate bade me. As I passed by St. Paul's Covent Garden, I turned into the churchyard; and with a silent prayer for the departed, and asking pardon of God for the profanation of which I had been guilty, I poured out the whole of the dust, with reverence, on a secluded spot, and then returned and joined my companions.

Taking leave of them shortly after, I repaired to the White Horse, in Fetter Lane; and, eating a light supper, retired to bed early, and thus finished this very memorable day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ralph begins to form his establishment, and engages a travelling tutor—travelling in the widest sense of the word—Prepares for a journey, and timorously knocks at the door of an old friend—gets repulsed; and, finally, gains his ends by showing his credentials, which means something very like showing fight.

ON the day succeeding, I found my arm so much swollen and myself altogether so ill, that I kept my bed. Mr. Pigtop called, and was very friendly in his behaviour. He seemed to have something upon his mind; but, either from innate modesty, or his natural deficiency of elocution, he was unable to relieve the pressure by words. I suspected that he was in want of money, and came to solicit a loan. I was deceived. He wished to make me a tender, and no less a one than of himself. I need not mention that the same surgeon attended me. I took this opportunity of furnishing myself with a few necessaries and a carpet-bag. I employed the chambermaid

on this momentous occasion. She was very moderate. She made only cent per cent profit on the purchases, which was paying remarkably cheaply for respectability, in her eyes, and those of the waiters; for I was now no longer the gentleman without any luggage.

On the third day of my confinement to the house, sitting alone in the deserted coffee-room, chewing the cud of my bitter fancies, Mr. Pigtop made his appearance. Though I knew the man to be thoroughly selfish, I believed him to have that dogged sort of honesty not uncommon to very vulgar minds. As, just then, any society was welcome, I received his condolences very graciously, and requested his company to dinner. My invitation was gladly accepted; and he occupied the time previously to that repast in giving me a history of his life. It was a very common one. He was the son of a warrant-officer. He was all but born on board a man-of-war. At the age of fifteen, he got his rating as a midshipman, and thence rose to be a master's-mate. There his promotion ceased, and, to all appearances, for ever. He had been already twenty-three years in the service, and was turned forty.

Never having had anything beyond his pay, his life had been one of ceaseless privation and discontent. He had now nearly spent all his money, and had omitted to make those reparations in his wardrobe, rendered so necessary by the malignity of Joshua Dauntton. He wished to leave the service, and be anything rather than what he had been. He had no relations living, and positively no friends. His prospects were most disconsolate, and his wretchedness seemed very great. However, he found considerable relief in unburthening himself to me.

After our frugal dinner of rump-steaks and our one bottle of port, he returned to the subject of the morning by asking my advice as to his future conduct.

"Nay, Pigtop," I replied, "you should not ask me. You are much more capable of judging for yourself; you, who have been so much longer in the world than I."

"There you are out of your reckoning. I have lived more than twice your years, and have never been in the world at all. On shore, I'm like a pig afloat in a washing-tub. What would you advise me to do?"

"You have no relations or friends to assist you?"

The mournful shake of his head was eloquently negative.

"And yet you will not resume that life for which alone you were educated?"

"I will not, and I cannot."

"Well, you must either go on the highway, or marry a fortune."

"Look at this figure-head—look at this scar. No—no one will ever splice with such an old ravelled-out rope-yarn as Andrew Pigtop. The road is no longer a gentlemanly profession. I intend to be a servant."

"You, Pigtop!—begging your pardon, who the devil would be encumbered with you?"

"You, I hope—don't laugh; I know you to be a gentleman born, and that you have a hundred a year. By hints that I have picked up, I believe, when you come of age, and that all is done right by you, that you'll have thousands. We have one view in common—to hang that rogue, Dauntton. I certainly do not wish to put on your livery, without you insist upon it. Call me your secretary, or anything you like—only let me be near you—your servant and your friend."

I saw the poor fellow's eye glisten, and his weather-worn features quiver. I looked upon his worn and shabby uniform, and reflected upon his long and unrequited services. Venerate him I knew that I never could; but I already pitied him exceedingly. I resolved, at least, to assist him, and to keep him near me for some time.

"Well, Pigtop," I at length said, "if you would be faithful—"

"To the back-bone—to the shedding of my blood. Stand by me now in my distress; and, while I have either soul or body, I will peril them for your safety."

"Pigtop, I believe you. Say no more about it. I engage you as my travelling tutor; and I will pay you your salary when I come of age—that is, if I am able. Now, what money have you?"

"Three pounds, fifteen shillings, and seven pence half-penny. Not enough to take me down to the guard-ship when I have paid my bill at the tavern."

"Then, my good fellow, go and pay it immediately, and come back with all possible speed." The prompt obedience that he gave to my first order argued well for his attention.

On his return, I addressed him seriously to this effect: "My friend, you shall share with me to the last shilling; but, believe me, my position is as dangerous as it is unnatural. It is full of difficulty, and requires not only conduct, but courage. I have a parent that either dares not, or, from some sinister motive, will not, own me—and I fear me much that I have a half-brother that I know is pursuing me with the assassin's knife, whilst I am pursuing him with the vengeance of the law. It is either the death of the hunted dog for me, or of the felon's scaffold for him. The event is in the hand of God. We must be vigilant, for my peril is great. My implacable enemy is leagued with some of the worst miscreants of this

vast resort of villany; he knows all the labyrinths of this Babel of iniquity; and the fraternal steel may be in my bosom even amidst the hum of multitudes. That man has a strong motive for my death, and to personify me afterwards. Already has he stolen my vouchers and my certificates. The mystery to me appears almost inscrutable; but his inducements to destroy me are obvious enough. I think that I am tolerably safe here, though I am equally sure that I am watched. Here is money. Go now, and purchase two brace of serviceable pistols and a couple of stout sword-canes. We will be prepared for the worst. Of course, you will sleep here, and hereafter always take up your abode in whatever place I may be. As you return, you must find, in some quiet street, an unobtrusive tailor—he must not have a shop—bring him here with you. I must put you in livery, after all.”

“Why, if so be you must, I suppose you must—I’m off.”

Pigtop did his commissions well. He returned with the arms and the tailor. “I hope,” said he, “you won’t want me to wear this livery long?”

“Not long, I hope. My friend,” said I, addressing the man of measures, “this gentleman, lately in the navy, has had recently a very serious turn. He is profoundly repentant of the wickedness of his past life—he has had a call—he has listened to it. It is not unlikely that he may shortly take out a license to preach. Make him a suit of sad-coloured clothes, not cut out after the vanities of the world. Your own would not serve for a bad model. You go to meeting, I presume?”

“I have received grace—I eschew the steeple house—I receive the blessed crumbs of the word that fall from the lips of that light of salvation, the Reverend Mr. Obadiah Long-spinner.”

“A holy and good man, doubtless; would that we were all like him! But, our time will come—yes, our time will come. As is the outward man of the Reverend Mr. Obadiah Long-spinner, so would my friend have his outward man—verily, and his inward also—improved unto sanctity.”

The devout tailor snuffled out “Amen,” and did his office. Whilst Pigtop’s clothes were preparing, he was not idle. He procured all the requisites for travelling, and I sent him on a fruitless mission to discover the residence of the Brandons. He was told by the neighbours that, a year back, they had all emigrated to Canada. Everything seemed to favour the machinations of my enemy, and to prevent my gaining any clue by which to trace him out, or the object of my search. However, I had one chance left—an interview with the superb Mrs. Causand, that lady that Joshua had so kindly bestowed upon me for a mother.

In three days, behold us in private lodgings, the Rev. Mr. Pigtop looking as sour as any canting Methodist in Barebones' parliament, and quite reconciled to the singularly starched figure that he presented. There was certainly a sad discrepancy between his dress and his discourse. However, it was a good travelling disguise, and very serviceable to a petty officer breaking his leave of absence.

With my health perfectly recovered, dressed with the greatest precision, and, with a beating heart, I went to call upon Mrs. Causand. On her all my hopes rested. I knew that, as a schoolboy, she was extremely fond of me, and I really loved her as much as I admired her. As I advanced towards her house, my heart beat with strange emotions.

I had never before visited her, and was, consequently, totally ignorant of the style in which she lived. From the expense in which she habitually indulged, and from the costliness of her dress when she used to visit Mrs. Cherfeuil at Stickenham, I argued that it must be something above mediocrity. I found the house which she inhabited, for I had always carefully preserved her address, to be one of those which faced Hyde Park. I was rather chilled as I observed its quiet aristocratic appearance. The dubious position that I held in society, and the continual rebuffs that I apprehended, made me, at that time, very nervous upon the point of intruding myself any where.

I was obliged to recall to my mind her white and jewelled hand running through my hair, and her prolonged caresses when I was a schoolboy, to give me courage to lift the knocker. I acquitted myself, however, of this task, creditably enough. It was opened, not by a porter, but by a very smart footman.

"Is Mrs. Causand at home?" said I, with amiable meekness.

The man surveyed me leisurely from top to toe; I even felt myself blushing under his scrutiny. After he had satisfied himself by his examination, he answered so rapidly, "No, sir," that the two words sounded exactly like "Noser."

As I was turning away slowly, and overcome with disappointment, a smart carriage stopped with a plunge at the doorway, the steps rattled, and out sprang a dapper, well-dressed, middle-aged gentleman. Taking three of the stone steps at a time, he was beside me in the hall, the impudent lacquey at the same time endeavouring to pass me on one side with his extended arm, in order to make room for the new comer.

"Mrs. C?" said he.

"Front drawing-room, sir."

And away sprang up the visiter, with almost mountebank activity. Now, from my youth upwards, I have always been

a mild creature—very milk—a flagon of sweet oil and gunpowder, the oil, of course, at the top. But, the gunpowder will sometimes ignite, and away goes all the oil in the face of the imprudent igniter.

"You lying scoundrel!" said I, seizing the fellow by his worsted lace collar, and shaking the powder out of his crisped locks, "'tis not a minute ago that you told me Mrs. Causand was not at home!"

"Sir, she is only at home to her particular friends."

"Know this, sirrah, that I am her most particular friend, and that I have come three thousand miles to see her."

My violence produced for me much more respect than my civility. The fellow became humble; and told me that, if I would walk into the adjoining parlour, and favour him with my name, he would go up immediately she was alone, and announce me. Being shown into the room which I found to be furnished with a most refined taste, though evidently only used for repasts, I began very naturally to make several reflections, neither very pleasing to myself, nor very honourable to the lady whom I was so anxious to see.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The miseries of suspense are sometimes pleasingly prolonged. Ralph, finding himself in pleasant places, prepareth a love-speech, which is not uttered in this chapter—Ralph describeth only.

MANY were the contending emotions that, each of them struggling for mastery in my bosom, almost seemed to rend it; and, strange as it may be thought, jealousy was one of the most dominant. Yet, was it not the sensual jealousy of passion, though passion was undoubtedly mixed up with it—for, despite the differences of age between this matured beauty and myself, I could not prevent my memory rioting in contemplation of her stately and perfect figure, her clear and brilliant complexion, and the liquid or the scorching fires of her full black eyes, equally beautiful, either in anger or in tenderness.

I was displeased, I was mortified, at the alacrity and freedom with which I saw the middle-aged and dapper gentleman skip up the well-carpeted stairs; and I was compelled to ask myself the revolting question, Is this, the goddess of my boyish idolatry, a wanton? This meeting, I felt, would be a momentous one. On it depended everything that could in-

terest or direct me—the resolving the mystery of my birth. My whole course of life hung upon the conversation of the next half hour, perhaps upon the caprice of—a what?—I grew sick with apprehension—the fifteen minutes of my expectancy seemed so many long and sorrow-laden years.

My senses preternaturally excited, I distinctly heard the bounding step of the visitor who had forestalled me spring from stair to stair; the door opened, and the plunge and the rattle of the wheels of his carriage, common-place as they were, seemed to me to have something in them ominous. The servant opened the door, and entered the apartment. I trembled excessively, and must have appeared deadlly pale.

“Shall I get you a glass of water, sir?” said the footman, respectfully.

“I thank you, no. Can I see the lady?”

He retired for about five minutes, then returned, bowed, and led the way. He stepped up quietly and slowly. There was an awe in his deportment that chilled me. He opened the door of the drawing-room with extreme caution and gentleness, bowed, and closed it upon me. As I stood near the threshold, the last low tones of some plaintive and soothing melody, sung in a tone much more subdued than that of common conversation, died faintly away to the vibrating of a chord of the harp; and a youthful figure, bathed in a misty light from the window recess, rose, and, moving silently across the room, without once casting her eyes upon myself, disappeared through a door parrallel to the one by which I had entered.

I saw, in her quiet transit, that she was very lovely, and her presence gave my heart a sudden gush of joy—for it proved to me that Mrs. Causand had not been alone when she had received her former visiter—and I felt my felicity depended upon her character; for, putting aside every other consideration, had not Dauntton told me she was my mother? I believed it not—but, the mere doubt was dreadful.

Whilst I remain in the darker portion of this saloon, it is necessary for me to describe it. I could not have imagined such a combination of taste and luxury. At first, I was almost overpowered by the too genial warmth of the apartment, and the aromatic and rose-imbued odours that filled it. I trod on, and my step sank into, a yielding carpet, that seemed to be elastic under my feet, and which glowed with a thousand never-fading though mimic flowers. The apartment was not crowded, though I saw candelabra, vases, and side-tables of the purest marble, supported upon massive gilt pedestals. In all this there was nothing singular—it was the work of the upholsterer: but the beautiful arrangement was the work of a presiding taste.

At the farther end of this superb room, stood two fluted and gilded pilasters, and two pillars of the Corinthian order, the capitals of which reached the ceiling; but they were not equidistant from each other, the space from the pilaster to the pillar, on either side, being much less than that between the two pillars. Between the two former, there were placed statues of the purest marble; what fabled god or goddess they were sculptured to represent I know not; I only felt that they personified male and female beauty. I was too agitated to permit myself to notice them accurately. Between this screen of pillars and statues, hung two distinct sets of drapery, the one of massive and crimson silk curtains, entirely opaque by their richness and their weight of texture, that drew up and aside with golden cords; the other of a muslin, almost transparent, how managed I had no time to examine.

When these draperies fell in their gorgeous and graceful folds to the ground, they made of the saloon two parts, and the division that embraced the windows had then all the privacy of a secluded apartment. When the curtains were let fall, thus intercepting the light from the bayed windows, there was still sufficient from the three sash-windows on the left of this large apartment to give splendour to what would then become the inner room.

The heavy draperies that hung between the pillars were drawn up, but the light muslin was dropped even with the rich Turkey carpet, through which I caught but a dim and glowing view of the recess. It was, as nearly as I can recollect, about three o'clock in the afternoon; and the sun, just dallying with the tops of the trees in the distant Kensington Gardens, sent his level beams directly through the large windows, and the orange-trees and exotics that were placed about them.

I advanced to the screen; and, when close upon it, I perceived the figure, though but faintly, of Mrs. Causand, reclining upon a couch. I paused—I do not think, on account of the distribution of the light, that she could have seen me through the veil that intervened between us. I dared not break through it without a summons; and there I stood, for two unpleasant minutes, endeavouring to imagine of what nature my reception would be; and, whether a lady surrounded by so much magnificence would listen to the appeal of her former pet-playfellow.

At this time, it was the fashion, in full dress, to show the whole of the arm bare to the shoulder. At length, from out of the mass of rich shawls, there was lifted the white, rounded, exquisitely shaped, though somewhat large, arm of the lady, beckoning me to enter; but sound there was none. "She

is delighted to play the empress," said I, as I pushed aside the curtain, and stood before her in her odoriferous sanctum.

Verily, in the pride of her beauty, she never looked more beautiful. She was in full dress—and, as I surveyed her in mute admiration, and my mind was busy at once with the past and the present, I pronounced her improved since I had last seen her; for I could perceive no difference in her countenance, except that her rounded and classic cheek glowed with a ruddier hue, and her eye sparkled with a more restless fire.

I stood before her at the foot of the couch, and my heart confessed that the perfection of womanly beauty lay beneath my wondering eyes, but a beauty which, if in smiles, would rather madden with voluptuousness than subdue with tenderness, and, if in repose, seemed to command worship, more than solicit affection.

As I stood mutely there, I looked into her regal countenance for some encouragement to speak—I saw none. I then strove to read there the sentiment then passing in her mind, and, to my confusion, to my dismay, it seemed to me that she was endeavouring to conquer in her countenance the expression of pain. I watched intently—I was not deceived—a sudden convulsion passed over her features, succeeded by the paleness of an instant, and then a gush of tears—I was moved, almost to weeping, yet dared not advance. Her tears were hurried off instantly; and then again her dear smile of former days sunned up her countenance into something heavenly.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ralph beginneth a conversation totally beyond his comprehension, and yet comprehendeth more than the conversation is meant to convey—He feeleth some inclination towards love-making, but checketh himself valiantly.

"My own brave Ralph," said she, extending to me both her hands.

"Your schoolboy lover," said I: an immense weight of anxiety removed from my mind, as I kissed her jewelled fingers.

"Hush, Ralph! such words are vanities—but ask me not why. Oh, my dear boy, make the most of this visit—"

"I will, I will—how beautiful you are! how very, very beautiful!"

"Am I!—I rejoice to hear you say so! Ralph, speak to me, as my own devoted, my more than loved friend—by all the affection that I have lavished on you, speak to me truly; do you, dearest Ralph, see no alteration in me?"

"A little," said I, smiling triumphantly, "a very little, for there was never room for much—you are a little more beautiful than when I last beheld you."

"Thank you—you have given me more happiness by the fervent honesty of that speech, than I have experienced for days and weeks, nay, months, before. Stand from me, and let me look at you—you, Ralph, are also much, very much improved—perhaps there is a little too much cast of thought upon your brow—that thought is a sad wrinkle-maker—but, Ralph, you are not well-dressed. But come and sit by me now there, on that low footstool. I always loved to play thus with your pretty curls—I wish that they were a shade darker—as you have grown so manly, it would have been as well. Truly, as I look into the ingenuous brightness of your countenance, the joys of past happy hours seem to wing themselves back, and whisper to me that word, so little understood—Happiness. But, Ralph, we will be alone together for this day at least—you shall dine with me here—we will have no interruption—you shall tell me all your deeds of arms—and, you naughty boy, of love also. Reach that bell, and ring it—but gently."

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I obeyed, and the same handsome young lady whom I had before seen answered the silver summons. She glided in, and stooped over to Mrs. Causand, as she lay on the couch, and their short conference was in whispers. As she retired, I was rather puzzled by the deep sorrow on her countenance, and the unfeigned look of pity with which she regarded her mistress or her friend. When we were again alone, I resumed my low seat, and was growing rather passionate over one of her beautiful hands, when, looking down, apparently much pleased with these silly endearments, she said, "Yes, Ralph, make the most of it; hand and heart, all, all are yours, for the little space that they will be mine."

Strange and disloyal thoughts began their turmoil in my bosom; and speculation was busy, and prospects of vanity began to dance before my eyes. Old enough to be my mother! What then? Mother! the thought brought with it the black train of ideas of which Dauntton was the demoniac leader. He had asserted that the superb woman before me might claim from me the affection of a son. I then felt most strongly that I was not there to play any ridiculous part.

The protestations that I was about to utter died on my lips—I spake not, but pressed the hand that I held to my heart.

"Now, Ralph," said Mrs. Causand, "relate to me all the wonders that you have encountered—speak lowly"—and she threw a white and very thin handkerchief over her face.

"But, my dear madam, why may I not gaze upon a countenance that you know is very dear to me? And this setting sun—how glorious! Do you know that, at his rising and his setting, I have often thought of you? Pray come to the window, and look upon it before it is quite hid among the trees."

"Ralph, by all the love that I bore your mother, by the affection that I bear to you, do not talk to me of setting suns! I dread to look upon them. You ask me to rise—oh, son of my best friend—know, that I cannot—without assistance—without danger—I am on my sick couch—on my dying bed—they tell me—me—me, whom you just now so praised for improved beauty, that my days are numbered—but, I believe them not—no—no—no—but hush, softly!—I may not agitate myself—you, my sweet boy, have surely come to me the blessed messenger of health—your finger shall turn back the hand upon the dial, and years, whole years of happiness, shall be yours and mine."

"Inscrutable ruler of heaven!" I exclaimed, "it is impossible! You are but trying my affection—you do but wish to witness the depth of my agony—you would prove me—but this is with a torture too cruel. Say—oh say—my dear Mrs.

Causand, that you are trifling with me—you—you are now the only friend that I have upon earth."

"These emotions, my dear boy, will slay me outright—the monster is now, even now, grappling with me—give me your hand." She took it, and placed it over the region of her heart. The shock it gave me was electric—the heart trembled beneath her bosom rapidly as flutter the wings of the dying bird—then paused—then went on. I looked into her face, and saw again the instant and momentary pallor, that had surprised me so much on my first entrance. The paroxysm was as short as it was violent, and her features again returned to their usual placidity of majestic beauty.

"You know it all now, Ralph—the least motion sets my heart in this unaccountable fury—and—alas! every attack is more acute than the last. They tell me that I am dying—I cannot believe it. I cannot even comprehend it. I have none of the symptoms of death upon me. Every thing around me breathes of health and happiness—you only were wanting to complete the scene—you are here—no—no, I will not die. Had my hair whitened, my form bowed, my complexion withered—why then—I might have been reconciled—but, no—it is impossible—no—no—Ralph, I am *not* dying."

"Fervently do I pray God that you are not. It also seems to me impossible—but still, the youngest of us cannot always escape—hoping, trusting, relying on the best, we should be prepared for the worst."

"But I am not prepared," she exclaimed with a fierce energy that breathed defiance; and then, relapsing into a profound melancholy, she mournfully continued—"and I cannot prepare myself."

"Have you spoken to a clergyman?" said I, not knowing exactly what else to say. "Is not this some book of divine consolation?"

I took it up; it was the popular novel of the day, entitled, "The Rising Sun." What a profound mockery for a death-bed!

"I tell you, my dear Ralph, that you must not agitate me. Talk of any thing but my approaching death—for know, that I am resolved *not* to die. To-morrow, there will be a consultation over my case of the very first of the medical faculty in the world. Ralph, do you not league together with the rest of the world, and condemn me to an untimely death."

"Untimely, indeed."

She had now evidently talked too much; she closed her eyes, and seemed to enjoy a peaceful and refreshing slumber. I sat by and watched her. Was I then in a sick chamber?—

“... was that personification of beauty doomed? I looked round, and pronounced it incredible. I gazed upon the recumbent figure before me, so still, so living, and yet so death-like—and moralized upon the utter deception of appearances.

At length she awoke, apparently much reanimated.

“My dear Ralph,” said she, “why are you not in mourning?”

“I understand you—and I perceive now that you are in black. But I must not disturb you—yet, if I dared, I would ask you one question—oh, in pity answer it—was she my mother?”

“Does death absolve us from our oaths?”

“I am not, my dear lady, casuist enough to answer you that question. But, do you know that I have become a desperate character lately? I write myself man, and will prove the authenticity of the signature with my life. I have renounced my profession—every pursuit, every calling, every thought—that may stand between me and the development of the mystery of my birth. It is the sole purpose of my life—the whole devotion of my existence.”

“Ralph—a foolish one—just now. Bide the course of events.”

“I will not—if I can control them. Through this detestable mystery, I have been insulted, reviled—a wretch has had the hardihood, the turpitude, to brand both you and me—me as the base-born child, and you as the ignominious parent.”

“Who, who, who?”

“A pale-faced, handsome, short, smooth-worded villain, with a voice that I now recognize for the first time—a coward—a swindler, that calls himself, undoubtedly among other aliases—”

“Stop, Ralph, in misery!” and, for the first time, she sat upright on her couch. “The crisis of a whole life is at hand—I must go through it, if I die on the spot—ring again for Miss Tremayne.”

The gentle and quiet lady was soon at Mrs. Causand’s side. There was a little whispering passed between them, some medicines put on the small work-table near the head of the couch, and, finally, a tolerably large packet of papers. She then cautioned Mrs. Causand most emphatically to keep herself tranquil, and, bowing to me slightly, glided out of the room.

CHAPTER XXX.

The veil is fast dropping from before Ralph's mysterious parentage—Strange disclosures, and much good evidence that this is a very bad world—Ralph's love-symptoms are fast subsiding.

"RALPH," said the lady, when we were again alone, "I have, through the whole of my life, always detested scenes, and, to the utmost of my power, ever repelled all violent emotions. I am not now going to give you a history of my life—to make my confessions, and ask pardon of you and God, and then die—nonsense; but I must say that your fate has been somewhat strangely connected with my own. I acknowledge to you, at once, that I am a fallen woman—but, as I never had the beauty, so I never had the repentance, of a Magdalen. I fell to one of the greatest upon the earth. I still think that it was a glorious fate. I know that you are going to wound me deeply. I will take it meekly; may it be, in some measure, looked upon as a small expiation for my one great error! But, spare me, as long as you are able, the name of this person you have described with such bitterness—it may not, after all, be he who has been almost the only bitterness that has yet poisoned my cup of a too pleasurable existence—'tis pleasurable, alas! until, even in this, my eleventh hour. Tell me all, and then I shall be able to judge how much it may be my duty to reveal to you."

It was a fine study, that of observing the gradual emotion of this worldly and magnificent woman, as I proceeded with my eventful tale. I took it up only at that period when Joshua Dauntou first made his application to me to be allowed to enter the Eos. The beginning of my narrative fell coldly upon her, and her features were strung up to that tension which I had often before observed in persons who were bracing up their nerves to undergo a dangerous surgical operation. They were certainly not impassive, for, in the fixed eyes that glared upon me, there was a strange restlessness, though not of motion.

The first symptoms of emotion that I could perceive took place when I described the lash descending upon the shrink-

ing shoulders of Dauntton. She clasped her hands firmly together, and upturned her eyes, as if imploring Heaven for mercy, or entreating it for vengeance. I perceived, as I proceeded, that I was gradually losing ground in her affections—that she was, in spite of herself, espousing the cause of my pledged enemy; and, when I told her of the defiance that I had received in the sick bay, she murmured forth, “Well done! well done!” followed by a name that was not mine.

When I related to her the documents that he had shown me to convince me that he was no impostor, she said, “Ralph, it is enough—it is of little consequence now what name you may give him. *He is my son!*”

“And my half-brother?”

“Oh no, no, young sir! Disgraced as he has been, a nobler blood than that of Rattlin flows in his veins. Degraded, disgraced as he is, neither on the side of the father nor of the mother need he blush for his parentage. But, you are his sworn enemy—I can now listen more calmly to what you have to say. But, graceless as he is, he should not have denied his own mother.”

“Mrs. Causand,” said I, in a tone of voice more cold than any with which I had yet addressed her, “it seems that you have, and that most unreasonably too, taken part against me. In no point have I sinned against you or your’s. I have all along been the attacked, the aggrieved party. I will no longer offend your ears, or wring your heart, by a recapitulation of your son’s delinquencies. He has done me much wrong; he is contemplating more—only place me in a situation of doing myself justice, and silence on the past shall seal my lips for ever; but know that he has stolen all my documents, and intends passing himself off to whomever may be my father, as his legitimate son, as myself.”

“This must not be—foolish, mad, wicked boy! That I, his mother, must stand up his accuser! must act against him as his enemy; but I have long ago discarded him—almost cursed him. Oh, Ralph, Ralph! had he been like you—but, from his youth upwards, he has been inclined to wickedness—no fortune could have supplied his extravagance—he has exhausted even a mother’s love. I refused him money, and he stole my papers—I never dreamt of the vile use that he intended to put them to. Spare me for a little while, and I will let you know all; but, should you once get his neck under your heel, oh! tread lightly on my poor William!”

She had evidently another and a most severe attack of her complaint, which passed rapidly over like the rest; but she

now had, for the first time within my observation, recourse to her medicines. When sufficiently recovered, she continued :

"Ralph, neither you nor any one shall know my private history. It is enough for you to understand that I was, almost from infancy, destined to associate with the greatest of the sterner sex. Early was I involved in this splendid—degradation, the austere would call it, though degradation I never held it to be. Even appearances were preserved; for before my wretched son was born, I was married to one of the pages of a German court, who was sixty years of age, and properly submissive and distant. To the English ear, this sounds like a confession of infamy. Let me not, Ralph, endeavour to justify it to you—I was taught otherwise—now, if I could, I would not regret it. Your father, then an only son, sometimes visited at the house of the person over whose establishment I presided, and—and, mark me, Ralph, injuriously as you must now think of me, I presided over but one. Deride me not when I tell that to that distinguished personage I was chaste."

She paused, and I thought that her voice faltered strangely, and that the assertion died upon her lips, and I made no reply. I was by no means astonished at this detail. I could only look upon her most anxiously, and await her future disclosures.

"I have," she continued, "lived for the world, and found it a glorious one. The husband of my heart, and the husband of ceremony, have long both been dead. I enjoy a competency—nay, much more,—and yet, they talk to me of dying. To-morrow will decide upon my fate. I have lived a good life, according to my capabilities—it is no delusion—but, should the sentence of to-morrow's consultation be fatal, then the lawyer and the clergyman—"

"And why not to-day?"

"Because it is our's, Ralph, or rather your's. Well, your mother was of good, though not of exalted, family, the daughter of a considerable freeholder in our neighbourhood. She was the eldest of many children, and the most beautiful born of all in the county. Her father sent her to London; and she became thus, for her station and the period, over-educated. She foolishly preferred the fashionable, and refined, and luxurious, service in a nobleman's family to a noble independence in her honest father's spacious house. It was her mistake and her ruin."

"Ralph! I loved your mother—you know it—but, as a governess in the Duke of E's family, I hated and feared her. I don't think that she was more beautiful than I, but he—whom I will never mention—began to be of that opinion—at

least I trembled. Reginald Rathelin loved her—wooed her—I entered with eagerness into his schemes—his success was my security. Miss Daventry at first repulsed me; but, at length I overcame her repugnance—many ladies, notwithstanding my ambiguous position, awed by the rank of my protector, received me—we became friends. The beautiful governess eloped—I managed every thing—they were married. I was myself a witness to the ceremony.”

“Thank God!” I exclaimed fervently.

“Reginald was wild and dissipated, poor and unprincipled—he cajoled his wife, and suffered her again to return to her menial station in the duke’s family. In due time there was another journey necessary. It was when you were born at Reading. ‘A little while, and yet a little while,’ was the constant plea of the now solicited husband, ‘and I will own you, my dear Elizabeth, and boast of you before all the world.’”

“My poor mother!”

“About two years after this marriage, Sir Luke, the father of Reginald, fell ill, and the neglect of the husband became only something a little short of actual desertion. Your mother had a proud as well as a loving spirit. She wrote to the father of Reginald—she interested the duke in her favour—she was now as anxious for publicity as concealment; but the expectant heir defied us all. He confessed himself a villain, and avowed that he had entrapped your mother by a fictitious marriage.”

“And he my father!—but you, *you her friend?*”

“He deceived me also. He declared the man who pretended to perform the marriage ceremony was not in holy orders. He dared us to prove it. His father, bred up in prejudice of birth and family, did not urge the son to do justice to your mother, but satisfied his conscience by providing very amply for yourself: he first took credit to himself for thus having done his duty, then the sacrament, and died.

“Your father, now Sir Reginald, in due time proposed for the richest heiress in the three adjacent counties, and was rejected with scorn. We made a strong party against him—the seat of his ancestors became hateful to him—he went abroad. His princely mansion was locked up—his estates left to the management of a grinding steward; and the world utterly forgot the self-created alien from his country.”

“Then, alas! after all, I am illegitimate.”

“And if you were?—but, methinks, that you are now feeling more for yourself than for your mother.”

“Oh no, no! tell me, tell me of her!”

“After this *expose*, she lived some few years respected in

the duke's family; but she changed her name—home to her father's she would never go—no tidings ever reached her of the man she looked upon as her seducer. It must be confessed, however, that he took great care of his child—he appointed agents to watch over your welfare, though I firmly believe that he never saw you in his life.”

“I think that he once made the attempt when I was at Roots' school; but, before I was brought to him, his conscience smote him, and he fled like a craven from his only and injured son.”

“Most probably. Rumour said that he made several visits to England under a strict incognito. But I must pause—the evening is fast waning—let me repose a little, and then we will have lights and dinner.” She fell back upon her couch, and appeared again to slumber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ralph thinks seriously about changing his name—Gets a little unwilling justice done to himself, and gains much information—The whole wound up suddenly and sorrowfully.

It was nearly dark, as I sat for more than half an hour by the side of the impenitent beauty—I could not conceive that she was in any danger. Whilst she discoursed with me so fully, her voice was firm, though not loud, and, were it not for a short and sudden check, sometimes in the middle of a word, I should say that I never before heard her converse more fluently or more musically.

While she yet reclined, the servants brought in lights, and made preparations for our little dinner, a small table being laid close to Mrs. Causand's couch. When this exquisite repast was ready, and Miss Tremayne made her appearance, Mrs. Causand rose, apparently much renovated. She looked almost happy: without assistance she walked from her sofa, and took her place at the table.

"There, Fanny," said she, quite triumphantly—"and not a single attack! This dear Ralph has surely brought health with him. Yesterday, this exertion would have killed me."

"Do not, however," said the lady, "try yourself too much."

We dined cheerfully: she seemed to have forgotten her son, and I my much injured mother. After the dinner was concluded, and Miss Tremayne had retired, and my hostess had returned to her sofa, she sent for her writing-desk, and then proceeded with her narrative.

"Your mother, my dear Ralph, yearned for your society. She had saved a considerable sum of money—she wished for a home, to procure which, she married that little, ugly, learned Frenchman, Cherfeuil—but even that she did not do, until it was currently reported, and generally believed, that your father was dead."

"I admire the delicacy of the scruple—I honour her for it."

"Sip your wine, Ralph—you'll find it excellent—I will indulge in one glass, let Dr. Hewings say what he will—to your health, my little lover, and may I soon hail you as Sir Ralph Rathelin!"

"How is it possible?"

"You shall hear. We were talking about your good mother. When she had married this Cherfeuil, who was the French assistant at a large school, she found out the agents to whom you were entrusted, and soon arranged with them that you should be domesticated under her own roof—you were removed to Stickenham, and she and you were happy."

"Oh, how happy!"

"Well, you know it was in those happy days that I had first the pleasure of forming an acquaintance with the inimitable Ralph Rattlin."

"But why Rattlin?—my name must be either Daventry or Rathelin."

"Rathelin, of a surety—it was first of all corrupted to Rattlin, by that topmost of all top-sawyers, Joe Brandon—it having ever been so established, for many reasons, concealment among the rest, your mother thought it best for you to retain it. Now, Ralph, mark this—about eight, or rather seven, months ago, I took a short trip to my native country in Germany. Never was my health more redundant. I left your mother prosperous and happy, and beautiful as ever—she had heard of you, and heard much in your favour, though you never once condescended to write to any one of us. Whilst I was in ——— your father returned, a changed man—changed in every thing, even in religion: he had turned

penitent and a Catholic, and so had his travelling companion, the very man who had married him to your sweet mother."

"Then he was in holy orders?"

"He was."

"God of infinite justice, I thank you!"

"The Reverend Mr. Thomas came here to my very house, when I was away, with a long and repentant letter from his patron—full of inquiries for yourself, and for your mother, Lady Rathelin."

"Where is that inestimable letter?"

"Oh, where?" said the again agonized Mrs. Causand. "Ralph, much mischief was done in that absence—my boy, my lost William! he, whom you know as Joshua Dauntton, broke into his mother's house, rifled my escritoire, and carried off some of my most important documents, that unread letter among the number."

"But how know you its contents?" said I, breathless with agitation.

"By the tenor of these succeeding ones from Sir Reginald and his priest."

She opened her desk, and gave me two letters from my father to her. They were, as she described them, repentant, and spoke most honourably and most fondly of my deceased mother—praying Mrs. Causand most earnestly to tell him of the happiness and the whereabouts of his wife.

"And you did, of course."

"No, Ralph, I did not—look at the dates. It was a fortnight after these arrived before I returned home. I weep even now when I think of it—three days before I returned, your mother had died, almost suddenly."

"Ah, true, true!" said I mournfully. But, a sudden pang of agony seizing my inmost heart, I suddenly started up, and seizing her roughly by the hand, I said sternly—

"Look me in the face, madam—do you see any resemblance there to my poor, poor mother?"

"Oh, very, very great—but why this violence?"

"Because I now understand the villany that caused her death. Your son murdered her—see in me her reproachful countenance—oh, Mrs. Causand, you and yours have been the bane, the ruin of me and mine."

"What do you mean by those horrible words? Ralph, beware, or you will yourself commit a dastardly murder upon me, even as you stand there."

"Mrs. Causand, I will be calm. I see it all. With the first letter of Sir Reginald's in his hand, he went to Stickendam; and, with the murderous intent strong in his black

bosom, he branded my mother with bigamy, incensed the weak Frenchman against her, and, in twenty-four hours, did the mortal work that years of injustice and injury could not effect."

"Good God, it must be so!—Ralph, I do not ask you to forgive him—but pity his poor suffering mother—he has broken my heart—not, Ralph, in the mystical, but in the actual, the physical sense. In the very hour in which I returned home, I found a warrant had been issued for his apprehension as a housebreaker; and the stony-hearted reprobate had the cruelty to insult his mother by a letter glorying in the fact, at the same time demanding a thousand pounds for his secrecy and the papers that he had stolen. The shock was too much for me. I had an attack, a fit—I know not what—I fell senseless to the earth—my heart has never since beaten healthfully. Oh, perhaps, after all, it would be a happiness for me to die!—Poor Elizabeth—my more than sister, my friend!"

"But why do I waste my time here?" said I, starting up, and seizing my hat. "The reptile is at work. Where lives Sir Reginald?—my demon-like double may be there before me. He may personate me long enough to kill my father and rifle his hoards. I must away—but, ere I go, know that, with these abstracted papers, he sought me in the West Indies, cheated me out of my name on my return to England, and, finally, waylaid and attempted, with a low accomplice, to assassinate me on my return from Stickenham."

"God of Heaven, let me die!—he could never have been son of mine—let me know the horrid particulars."

"No—no—no—I must away—or more murders will be perpetrated."

"Stop, Ralph, a little moment—do not go unprovided. Take these and these—he stole not all the documents—let me also give my testimony under my own hand of your identity. It may be of infinite service to you."

She then wrote a short letter to Sir Reginald, describing accurately my present appearance, and vouching that I, and none other, was the identical Ralph Rattlin, who was nursed by the Brandons, and born at Reading.

"Take this, Ralph, and show it to Sir Reginald. I only ask one thing: spare the life—only the life—of that unfortunate boy!—and, in his, spare mine—for I am unprepared to die!"

"The mercy that he showed my mother—"

I had proceeded no farther in my cruel speech, when a great noise was heard at the door, and two rough-looking

Bow Street officers, attended by the whole household, rushed into the room. They advanced towards the upper end of this elegant sanctum. Mrs. Causand sprang up from her sofa, and, standing in all the majesty of her beauty, sternly demanded, "What means this indignity?"

"Beg your ladyship's pardon, sorry to intrude—duty—never shy, that you know, ma'am—only a search-warrant for one Joshua Daunton, alias Sneaking Willie, alias White-faced—"

"Stop, no more of this ribaldry—you see he is not here—I know nothing concerning him—of what is he accused?"

"Of forgery, housebreaking, and, with an accomplice, of an attempt to murder a young gentleman, a naval officer, of the name of Ralph Rattlin."

Mrs. Causand turned to me sorrowfully, and exclaimed, "Oh, Ralph! was this well done of you?" Her fortitude, her sudden accession of physical strength, seemed to desert her at once; and she, who just before stood forth the undaunted heroine, now sank on her couch, the crushed invalid. At length, she murmured forth, "Ralph, rid me of these fellows."

I soon effected this. I told them that I was the culprit's principal accuser; that I was assured he was not only not within the house, but I verily believed many miles distant. They believed me, and respectfully enough retired.

Miss Tremayne, the companion and nurse of the invalid, now with myself stood over her. She had another attack upon the region of her heart; and it was so long before she rallied, that we thought the fatal moment had arrived. When she could again breathe freely, her colour did not, as formerly, return to her cheeks. They wore an intense and transparent whiteness, at once awful and beautiful. Yet she spoke calmly and collectedly. I entreated to be permitted to depart—my intercessions were seconded by the young lady. But the now cold hand of Mrs. Causand clasped mine so tightly, and the expression of her eyes was so imploring, that I could not rudely break away from her.

"But a few short minutes," she exclaimed, "and then fare you well. I feel worse than I ever yet remember—and very cold. It is not now the complaint that has cast me down upon a sick bed that seems invading the very principle of life—a chilly faintness is coming over me—yet I dare not lay my head upon my pillow, lest I never from thence lift it again. Ralph, there is warmth in your young blood—support me!"

I cradled her head upon my shoulder, and whispered to

Miss Tremayne, who immediately retired, to procure the speedy attendance of the physician.

"Are we alone, Ralph?" said the shuddering lady, with her eyes firmly closed. "I have a horrid presentiment that my hour is approaching—every thing is so still around and within me. Every sensation seems deserting me rapidly, but one—and that is a mother's feelings! You will leave me here to die, amongst menials and strangers!"

"Miss Tremayne!" said I, soothingly.

"Is but a hired companion; engaged only since the occurrence of these attacks. Yes, you will desert me to these—and for what, God of retribution!—to hunt down the life of my only son! Will you, will you, Ralph, do this over-cruel thing?"

"He has attempted mine—he still seeks it. Let us talk, let us think, of other matters. Compose your mind with religious thoughts. Your strength will rally during the night; to-morrow comes hope, the consultation of physicians, and, with God's good blessing, life and health."

"To hear, to know, that he is to die the death of the felon! Promise me to forego your purpose, or let me die first!"

"I have sworn, over the grave of my mother, that the laws shall decide this matter between us. If he escape, I forgive him, and may God forgive him, too!"

"And must it come to this?" she sobbed forth in the bitterness of her anguish, whilst the tears streamed down her cheeks from her closed eyelids. "Will this cruel youth at length extort the horrible confession!—it must be so—one pang—and it will be over. Let me forego your support—lay me gently on the pillow, for you will loathe me. A little while ago, and I told you I had been faithful to him—it was a bitter falsehood—know, that my son, my abandoned William, is also the son of your father—say, will his blood now be upon your hands?"

"Tell me, beautiful cause of all our miseries, does your miserable offspring know this?"

"Yes," said she, very faintly.

"Yet he could seek my life—basely—but, no matter. His blood shall never stain my hand—I will not seek him—if he crosses my path, I will avoid him—I will even assist him to escape to some country, where unknown, he may, by a regenerated life, wipe out the dark catalogue of his crimes, make his peace with man here, and with his God hereafter."

"Will you do all this, my generous, my good, my godlike Ralph?"

"You and God be my witnesses!"

She sprang up wildly from her apparent state of lethargy, clasped me fervently in her arms, blessed me repeatedly, and then, in the midst of her raptures, she cried out, "Oh, Ralph, you have renewed my being, you have given me long years of life, and health, and happiness. You—" and here she uttered a loud shriek, that reverberated through the mansion—but it was cut short in the very midst—a thrilling, a horrible silence ensued—she fell dead upon the couch.

I stood awe-struck over the beautiful corpse, as it lay placidly extended, disfigured by no contortion, but, on the contrary, a heavenly repose in the features—a sad mockery of worldly vanity. Death had arrayed himself in the last imported Parisian mode.

At that dying shriek in rushed the household, headed by the physician, and closely followed by the companion, with the hired nurses. Methought that the doctor looked on this wreck of mortality with grim satisfaction. "I knew it," said he, slowly; "and Doctor Phillimore is nothing more than a solemn dunce. I told him that she would not survive to be subjected to the consultation of the morrow.—And how happens it," said he, turning fiercely to the companion and the nurses, "that my patient was thus left alone with this stripling?"

"Stripling, sir!" said I.

"Young man, let us not make the chamber of death a hall of contention. Tell me, Miss Tremayne, how comes my patient thus unattended, or rather thus ill attended?"

"It was her own positive command," said the young lady, in a faltering voice.

"Ah, she was always imperious, always obstinate. There must have been some exciting conversation between you, sir, (turning to me) and the lady; did you say any thing to vex or grieve her?"

"On the contrary; she was expressing the most unbounded hope and happiness when she died."

"And the name of God was not on her lips, the prayer for pardon not in her heart, when she was snatched away."

I shook my head. "Well," said he, "it is a solemn end, and she was a wilful lady. Do you know, Miss Tremayne, if she have any relations living?—they should be sent for."

"I know of none. A person of distinction, whose name I am not at liberty to mention, sometimes visited her. We had better send for her solicitor."

Some other conversation took place, which I hardly noticed. The body was adjusted on the couch, we left the room, and the door was locked. As I walked quietly, almost stealthily,

home, I felt stunned. Health and mortality, death and life, seemed so fearfully jumbled together, that I almost doubted whether I was not traversing a city of spirits.

No sorrow then hung about my heart—I was rather inclined to deride earth and all that it contained. The reckless and hard mirth, more expressive of pain than the bitterest tears, was fast seizing upon me; and, when I broke into the room of our humble lodgings, it was with a ribald jest and a sneer at the scene that I had just witnessed with which I accosted my newly-endowed travelling tutor, Pigtop.

My Achates stared at me when I had described to him the late occurrences, and shook his head. "I don't see much cause for sniggering," said he.

"Why, has not John Bull one pension less to pay—and a glorious one, too!—don't we love our country, Pigtop? But, we must be off to-morrow. There's my double, depend upon it, doing the filial with my honoured and most Catholic father."

"And have you at length discovered him!" said he.

"I have—a voice almost from the grave has imparted to me all that I wished to know—and something more. I have sprung from a beautiful race—but, we must not speak ill of kith and kin, must we, Pigtop?"

"For certain not. And, so your father actually did send that old lord to look after you at your return from the West Indies? Well, that shows some affection for you, at all events."

"The fruits of which affection Dauntton is, no doubt, now reaping."

"Well, let us go and cut his throat, or rather turn him over to the hangman."

"No, Pigtop; I have promised his mother that I will not attempt his life."

"But, I have net."

"Humph—let us to roost. To-morrow, at break of day, we will be off for Rathelin Hall. See that our arms are in order. And now to what rest nature and good consciences will afford us."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Mr. Pigtop believeth in Ghosts, and hath some trust in Witches, but none at all in Lawyers.—A consultation after supper, and, after supper, action.

EARLY next morning, Mr. Pigtop and myself were seated in a post-chaise, making the best of our way towards the western extremity of England. Notwithstanding the speed of our conveyance, the journey was necessarily long, and our debate was frequent and full upon the plan of our operations. When we had arrived at Exeter, where we found it necessary to sleep, in order to gain some little restoration from the fatigues of our incessant travelling, we made up our minds to hire three horses and a groom, and, having very accurately ascertained the exact site of Rathelin Hall, which was situated a few miles to the north-eastward of Barnstaple, we arrived there towards the close of the day, and put up at a very decent inn in an adjoining village.

The old and large house was distinctly visible, notwithstanding the well wooded park in which it was situated, from the windows of our inn. A conference with our host fully realized our worst fears. He informed us that Sir Reginald was not expected to live many days; that his whole deportment was very edifying; and, moreover, that his dying hours were solaced and sweetened by the presence and the assiduities of his only and long-disowned, but now acknowledged, son, Ralph. We, moreover, learned that this Ralph came attended by a London attorney, and that they, with the priest Thomas, in the intervals between rest, refection, and prayer, were actively employed in settling his sublunary affairs, very

much to the dissatisfaction of a Mr. Seabright, the family solicitor, and the land-steward of the estate.

"Where does Mr. Seabright reside?" was my question, instantly.

"Why, here, sir, to be sure, in our town of Antwick, and mortally in dudgeon he has taken all this."

"Undoubtedly, and with justice," was my reply. "So faithful a servant, who has for so many years had the sole management of the Rathelin affairs, should not be cast off so slightly. Give us as good a supper, landlord, as your skill and Antwick can produce, and let us have covers for three. Send your porter down to Mr. Seabright—but, I had better write him a note." So I sent to him a polite invitation to sup with us, telling him that two strangers wished to see him on important business.

To all these proceedings Pigtop demurred. He was for the summary process of going before a magistrate next morning, and taking out a warrant to apprehend Joshua Dauntton on the capital charge for which he was pursued in London, and thus, at one blow, wind up the affair.

But, I held my promise to Mrs. Causand to be sacred, and determined to give him, my fraternal enemy, one chance of escaping. Pigtop's repugnance, however, to the employment of a lawyer could not be overcome; so, not being able to obtain his consent, I determined to try and do without it, which my friend averred to be impossible.

At nine o'clock precisely, as the smoking dishes appeared, so did the lawyer. A sudden emotion was perceptible on his iron-bound visage when his eyes first fell upon me, of the nature of which I could form no idea. Mr. Pigtop bowed to him very stiffly; and it was some time before the genuine cordiality of my manner could put Mr. Seabright at his ease.

While we were at table, I begged to decline giving him our names, as I was fearful that the intelligence might travel to the Hall, and thus give some scope for further machinations on the part of Joshua. But, as is too often the case, we were prudent only by halves.

The groom that we had hired, not being enjoined to secrecy, had unhesitatingly told every one belonging to the establishment our appellations. The landlord and his household were much struck by the similarity of the name by which I still went, Rattlin, and that of Rathelin; and thus whilst I was playing the cautious before Mr. Seabright, the news had already reached the Hall, and those most concerned to know it, that two gentlemen, a Mr. Rattlin and a Mr. Pigtop, with

their groom, had put up at the Three Bells in the village, and had sent for the lawyer.

Had I been inclined for amusement, I should have found it to satiety, in the humorous scene between the stiff lawyer and the dissatisfied old sailor—the lawyer always speaking of Pigtop as the ~~reverend~~ gentleman, and addressing him as reverend sir. When, after supper, we had carefully secured the privacy of our apartment, amidst many nudges and oburgations from my former shipmate, I proceeded to relate to the astonished solicitor who I was, and what were my motives for appearing at that juncture in the neighbourhood. I also told him of the personation of myself that I understood was then going on at the Hall, at the same time totally suppressing every other guilty circumstance of Dauntton's life.

When I had finished my recital, I produced my documents; and, notwithstanding ~~that~~ he was almost breathless with wonder, he confessed that he believed implicitly all my assertions, and would assist me to recover my rights, and disabuse my father, to the utmost of his abilities.

"You have lost much valuable time," said he. "This impostor has now been domesticated some days with Sir Reginald. I think, with you, that he has no ulterior views upon the title and the estates. His object is present plunder, and the inducing your father, through the agency of that scoundrel London lawyer, to make him sign such documents, that every thing that can be willed away will be made over to him. We must, to-morrow, proceed in a body to the Hall, and take the villains by surprise. I will now return home, and prepare some necessary documents. As this is a criminal matter, I will also take care to have the attendance of an upright and clear-seeing magistrate, who will proceed with us—not certainly later than ten o'clock to-morrow."

He then took his leave with an air of much importance, and more alacrity than I could have expected from a man of his years.

When Pigtop and myself were left alone, neither the first nor second nor-wester of brandy and water could arouse him from his sullen mood. He told me frankly, and in his own sea-slang, that he could not disintegrate the idea of a lawyer from that of the devil, and that he was assured that neither I nor my cause would prosper if I permitted the interference of a landshark. I was even obliged to assume a little the authority of a master, in order to subdue his murmurings—to convince his judgment I did not try—in which forbearance I displayed much wisdom. We each retired to our respective

bedroom, with less of cordiality than we had ever displayed since our unexpected re-union.

I had no sooner got into bed, than I determined, by a violent effort, to sleep. I had always a ready soporific at hand. It was a repeating and re-repeating of a pious little ode by a late fashionable poet. It seldom failed to produce somnolency at about the twelfth or thirteenth repetition. I would recommend a similar prescription to the sleepless; and I can assure them that there is much verse lately printed, and by people who plume themselves no little upon it, that need not be gone over more than twice at farthest; excepting the person may have the St. Vitus's dance, and then a third time may be necessary. I would specify some of these works, were it at all necessary—but the afflicted have only to ask at random, for the last published volume of poems, or take up an annual, either old or new, and they may be *dosed* without the perpetration of a pun.

Three times had I slept by the means of my ode, and three times had I awaked by some horrible dream, that fled my memory with my slumbers. I could draw no omen from it, for my mind could not bring it out sufficiently distinct to fix a single idea upon it. However, as I found my sleep so much more miserable than my watchfulness, I got up, and, putting on a portion of my clothes, began to promenade my room, with a slow step and a very anxious mind.

I had made but few turns, when my door was abruptly thrust open, and Pigtop stalked in, fully dressed.

"I can't sleep, Rattlin," said he; "and tarnation glad am I to see that you can't caulk either. A dutiful son you would be to be snoozing here, and very likely, at this very moment, the rascal's knife is hacking at your father's weazand. It is not yet twelve o'clock; and I saw from my window, from whence I can see the hall plainly, a strange dancing of lights about the windows; and you may take an old sailor's word that something uncommon's in the wind. Let us go and reconnoitre."

"With all my heart; any action is better than this wretched inactivity of suspense. I will complete my dress, and you, in the mean time, look to the pistols."

We were soon ready, and sallied forth unperceived from the inn. We had no purpose, no ultimate views; yet, both Pigtop and myself seemed fully to understand that we should be compelled into some desperate adventure. I was going armed, and by night, like an assassin, to seek the presence, or, at least, to watch over the safety, of a father whom I had never seen, never loved, and never respected.

I cannot elevate the moral feelings of my readers by any display of filial affections. My impulses were utterly selfish, and decidedly revengeful and unchristian.

The space that separated the abode of my father from the inn was soon past; and, a little after midnight, I stood within the gloomy and park-like enclosure that circumscribed the front of the large old mansion. The lodge was a ruin, the gates had been long thrown down, and we stumbled over some of their remnants, imbedded in the soil, and matted to it with long and tangled grass. I observed that there was a scaffolding over the front of the lodge; but, whether it were for the purpose of repairing or taking down, I could not then discover.

As my companion and myself advanced to the front of the building, we also observed that, lofty as were its walls, it was scaffolded to the very attics, and some part of the roof of the right wing was already removed. Altogether, a more comfortless, a more dispiriting view, could hardly have been presented; and its disconsolateness was much increased by the dim and fitful light that a young moon gave, at intervals, upon gables, casement, and clumps of funereal yews.

"And this," as we stood before the portals, said I, to Pigtop, "is my inheritance—mine. Is it not a princely residence?"

"It looms like a county jail, that's being turned into a private madhouse. If so be as how witches weren't against the law of the land, this seems the very place for them. Do you believe in ghosts?"

"Verily, yes, and—no."

"Because, I think that I see the ghosts of a hearse and four horses among those tall trees in that corner."

"Then, Pig, we must be on the alert—for I see it, too—but, the vision has assumed the every-day deception of a post-chaise and four."

"Jeer as you will, it is a hearse: somebody's just losing the number of his mess; it will take away a corpse to-night, depend upon it. That a post-chaise! pooh!—I can see the black plumes waving upon the horses' heads—and—hark at the low, deep moanings that seem to sweep by it—that is not at all natural—let us go back."

"I was never more resolved to go forward. There is villainy hatching—completing. Wrap your cloak closely about your countenance; don't mistake the wind for groans, nor the waving branches of cedar-trees for hearse-plumes—but follow me."

"Who's afraid?" said Pigtop.

His chattering teeth answered the question.

As I was prepared for every thing, I was not surprised to find the principal door open, and the hall filled with iron-bound cases, and several plate-chests. As we stepped into the midst of these, completely muffled in our cloaks, a fellow came up and whispered us, "Is all ready?"

"Hush!" said I.

"Oh, no fear—they are at prayers in Sir Reginald's bedroom—he is going fast—he is restless—he cannot sleep."

"Where are the servants?"

"Snoring in their nests."

"And who is with Sir Reginald?"

"Nobody but the priest, and his son, Master Ralph—without the lawyer has gone up since; he saw all right about the chaise. But am I on the right lay?"

"Surely. Joshua Daunton and I—"

"Enough—you're up to trap—so lend us a hand, and let us take the swag to the shay—though swag it aint, for it's all Joshe's by deed of law. Sir Reginald signs and seals to-night, as they say he can't live over to-morrow."

"No, there is no occasion to stir yet—which is the way to Sir Reginald's room? I must speak one word to Joshua before we start. I know the countersign—it will bring him out to me in a moment. I would advise you, in the mean time, just to step to the chaise and see all right, and bring it up nearer the door quietly, mind—quietly—for these boxes are d—d heavy."

"You're right there," said the accomplice, and departed on his errand, after previously showing me the staircase that led to the apartment of my sick father.

When the rascal's steps were no longer heard, "Now, Pigtop," said I, "show your pluck—help me to lock and bar the hall-door—good—so one bloodhound is disposed of; he dare not make a noise, lest he should rouse the establishment. Now follow me—but, hark ye—no murder—the reptile's life must be spared."

Pigtop made no answer; but pointed to his scarred and disfigured lip with a truly ferocious grin.

It is necessary, for the fully understanding of the catastrophe that ensued, that I describe the site of the old building in which such startling events were passing. The front approach was level from the road; but, on the back, there was a precipitous and rugged, and rocky descent, up to the very buttresses that supported the old walls—not certainly so great or so dangerous as to be called a precipice; for, on the extreme right wing of the rear of the house, it was no more than a

gentle inclination of the soil, deepening rapidly towards the left, and there, directly under the extremity of that wing, assuming the appearance of a vast chasm, through the bottom of which a brawling stream chafed the pointed stones, on its way to the adjacent sea.

Sir Reginald's sleeping room was a large tapestried apartment on the first floor; the windows of which occupied the extreme of the left wing of the house, and was directly over the deepest part of the chasm which I have described.

All this part of the mansion was scaffolded also; the ends of the poles having what appeared to be but a very precarious insertion on the projections of the rocks below. It had been the intention of Sir Reginald thoroughly to repair his mansion; but, falling sick, and in low spirits, he had ordered the preparations to be delayed. The scaffolding had been standing through the whole of the previous winter; and the poles, and more especially the ropes that bound them to the cross-pieces, had already gone through several stages of decay.

CHAPTER. XXXIII.

The concluding Chapter, in which at least one subject is dropped—At length get into my inheritance according to law—that is, I am heir to three lawsuits—Discover a new Method of putting down Poaching—and come to London to enact the character of “Celebs in Search of a Wife.”

My associate and myself advanced stealthily and noiselessly up the staircase. We met no one. The profoundest security seemed to reign every where. Favoured by the dark shadows that hung around us, we advanced to the door that was nearly wide open, and we then had a full view of every thing within. The picture was solemn. Seated in a very high-backed, elaborately-carved, and gothic chair, supported on all sides by pillows, sat the attenuated figure of my father. I gazed upon him with an eager curiosity mingled with awe. His countenance was long and ghastly—there was no beauty in it. Its principal expression was terror. It was evident that his days were numbered. I looked upon him intently. I challenged my heart for affection, and it made no answer.

Directly before my father was placed a table, covered with a rich and gold embroidered cloth, bordered with heavy gold fringe, upon which stood four tall wax-candles, surrounding a mimic altar surmounted by an ebony crucifix. His chaplain, dressed in popish canonicals, was mumbling forth some form of prayer, and a splendidly illuminated missal lay open before him. There was also on the table a small marble basin of water, and a curiously inlaid box filled with bones—relics, no doubt—imbued with the spirit of miracle-working. The priest was perhaps performing a private midnight mass.

The fitful attention that Sir Reginald gave to this office was painful to contemplate. His mind was evidently wandering, and he could bring himself to attend only at intervals. At another table, a little removed from the one I have described,

sate the person of the London attorney; he had also two lights, and he was most busily employed in turning over and indexing various folios of parchment. But I have yet to describe the other figure—the, to me, loathsome person of my illegitimate half-brother. He was on his knees, mumbling forth the responses and joining in the prayers of the priest. He was paler and thinner than usual; he looked, however, perfectly gentlemanly, and was scrupulously well dressed.

As yet, I had not heard the voice of Sir Reginald; his lips moved at some of the responses that the two made audibly, but sound there was none. At length, when there was a total cessation of the voices of the other, and a silence so great in that vast apartment that the rustling of the lawyer's parchments was distinctly heard, even where I stood—even this hardened wretch seemed to feel the general awe of the moment, and ceased to disturb the tomb-like silence.

In the midst of this, the prematurely-old Sir Reginald suddenly lifted up his voice and exclaimed loudly, in a tone of the most bitter anguish, "Lord Jesu, have mercy upon me!"

The vast and ancient room echoed dolorously with the heart-broken supplication. It was the first time that my father's voice fell upon my ear—it was so plaintive, so imbued with wretchedness, that the feeling of resentment which, I take shame to myself, I had long suffered in my bosom, melted away at once, and a strange tenderness came over me. I could have flung myself upon his bosom and wept. I felt that my mother's wrongs had been avenged. Even as it was, with all the secrecy that I had then thought it my interest to preserve, I could not refrain, in a subdued, yet earnest tone, from responding to his broken ejaculation, from the very bottom of my heart, "Amen."

A start of surprise and terror, as my hollow response reached the ears of all then and there assembled, followed my filial indiscretion. Each looked at the other with a glance that plainly asked, "Was the voice thine?" and each in reply shook his head.

"A miracle!" exclaimed the priest. "The sinner's supplication has been heard. Let us pray."

During this solemn scene, events of a very different description were taking place at the inn which we had just clandestinely left. Our exit had been noticed. The landlord was called up; he became seriously alarmed, the more especially when the direction that we had taken had been ascertained. He immediately concluded that we had gone to Rathelin Hall to commit a burglary, or perhaps a robbery. He summoned to his aid the constables of the village—called up the magis-

trate, and the lawyer, Mr. Seabright; and, with a whole posse of attendants, proceeded to the rescue. We will conduct them to the door that Pigtop and myself had secured when we barred out Dauntton's accomplice, and, there leaving them, return to the sick chamber.

After the reverend gentleman had concluded his extempore prayer, but few of the sentences of which reached our place of concealment, Sir Reginald said, "My friends, the little business that we have to do to-night had better be done speedily. I feel unusually depressed. I hope that it is not the hand of death that is pressing so heavily upon me. I would live a little while longer—but the will of God, the Redeemer of our sins, be done! Bring the papers here—I will sign them. My friend, Brown, and you, my poor and too long neglected Ralph, (addressing Joshua,) I trust to your integrity in all this matter; for not only am I averse to, but just now incapable of, business. But, my dear Ralph, before we do this irrevocable deed, kneel down and receive a repentant father's blessing, and hear that father ask, with a contrite heart, pardon of his son and of his God."

The parchments were brought and placed before the baronet by the assiduous lawyer, and the son—for son to Sir Reginald he really was—with looks of the most devout humility, and his eyes streaming with hypocritical tears, knelt reverently down at the feet of the trembling and disease-stricken parent. His feeble hands are outstretched over the inclined head of the impostor, his lips part—this—this—I cannot bear—so, before a single word falls from our common father, I rush forward, and, kneeling down beside my assassin-brother, exclaim, in all the agony of wretchedness, and the spirit of a newly-born affection, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!—he has taken away my birthright, and, behold, he would take away my blessing also. Bless even me!"

"Ralph Rattlin, by all that's damnable!" screamed forth the self-convicted impostor.

Thus, this apparently imprudent and rash step was productive to me of more service than could have been hoped from the deepest-laid plan. In a moment we were on our feet, and our hands on each other's throats. This sudden act seemed miraculously to invigorate our father—he rose from his seat, and, standing to the full height of his tall and gaunt figure, placing his bony hand heavily on my shoulder, and looking me fixedly in the face, said, "If thou art Ralph Rathelin, who then is this?"

"The base-born of your paramour!"—and with a sudden energy I hurled him from me, and he lay bruised and crouch-

ing beneath the large oriel window, at the extremity of the room.

"It was unseemly said, and cruelly done," said the baronet sorrowfully. "Oh, but now my sins are remembered upon me! I cast my sons loose upon the face of the earth, and, in my dying hour, they come and struggle together for their lives before my eyes—verily am I punished; my crime is visited heavily upon me."

The other parties in the room were little less affected with various emotions. The London attorney was making rapidly for the door, when he was met by the advancing Pigtop, who thrust him again into the apartment, and then boldly faced the priest—the latter still in his canonicals, the former dressed as a sectarian preacher.

Their antipathy was mutual and instantaneous. But, ere the really reverend gentleman could begin some pious objur-gation at this apparent interference with his communicant, Pigtop indulged in one of the heaviest oaths that vulgarity and anger together ever concocted, and straightway went and seized the crouching Joshua, and lugged him before the agonized father, exclaiming, "Warrants out against him, Sir Reginald, for burglary, forgery, and assassination—he is my prisoner."

The craven had not a word to say—his knees knocked together—he was a pitiable object of a terror-stricken wretch. Sir Reginald already began to look down upon him with contempt; and my heart bounded within me, when I already found him leaning parentally on my shoulder. "Speak, trembler!—is this person the veritable Ralph Rathelin?"

"Pity me, pardon me, and I will confess all."

"Splits!" said the attorney, and vanished through the now unguarded room.

"Speak."

"This gentleman is your lawful son—but I also—"

"No more—escape—there is gold—escape—hide yourself from the eye of man for ever!"

"No," said Pigtop, giving him a remorseless shake—"Do you see this scar?"

"Let him go instantly, Pigtop!—obey me—I have promised his mother—it is sacred."

"For my sake!" said Sir Reginald.

At this moment, the steward rushed in, partly dressed, crying out, "Sir Reginald, Sir Reginald, the constables and the magistrates have broken down the hall-door, and are now coming up stairs, to arrest the housebreakers—they have packed up all the plate, and it lies in the hall, ready to be carried off!"

"My God! it is too late," said Sir Reginald, wringing his hands.

"No," said I, "let him escape by the window. Be so good, sir, said I to the priest, "to secure the door—we shall gain time. Hold it as long as you can against all intruders. The scaffolding will enable the culprit to reach the ground with comparative little danger."

The priest obeyed; and not only fastened the door, but also barricaded it with furniture.

"Now, Pigtop," said I, "if you wish to preserve my friendship, assist this poor wretch to escape—he is paralyzed with his abject fears. Come, sir," addressing Joshua, "you will certainly be hung if you don't exert yourself."

"He'll be hung yet," said Pigtop sulkily. "But I am an old sailor, and will obey orders—nevertheless, I know that I shall live to see him hung. Come along, sirrah!"

Between us we led him to the window. We then thrust him out, and he stood shivering upon the cross boarding of the scaffolding level with the window-sills.

"Slide down the poles, and run," said I and Pigtop together.

"I can't," said he, shuddering; "the chasm is awfully deep."

"You must, or die the death of the felon."

"Oh, what shall I do?"

"Cast off the lashing just above you," said Pigtop; "pass it over the cross-piece over your head, make a running noose, put it under your arms, and keep the other end of the rope in your hand. You may either eling to the pole with your legs as you like, or not—for then you can lower yourself down at your ease, as comfortably as if you were taking a nap."

"Come away, Pigtop—shut the window, close the shutters—the constables are upon us!" I exclaimed. This was done immediately, and thus was the immaculate Joshua shut out from all view. As the attacks on the door of the apartment became more energetic, and we concluded that Joshua was now safe, we were going to give the authorities entrance, when we heard a dreadful crash on the outside of the window.

"The lubber's gone by the run, by G—d!" said Pigtop; "he'll escape hanging, after all!"

"Let us hope in mercy not," said Sir Reginald, shuddering. "I trust it is not so. I hear no scream, no shriek. I am sure, by the sound, that it was the toppling down of the boards—he has most likely displaced some of them in his descent."

"Shall we admit, Sir Reginald, the people who are thundering at the door?"

"Not yet: let there be no appearance of disorder—remove these;" pointing to the small altar and the crucifix; "would it not be as well, my friend, to divest yourself of those holy vestments?—they are irritating to heretical eyes. Assist me, sir, to my chair."

I placed him respectfully nearly in the position in which I first discovered him. All vestiges of the Catholic Religion were carefully removed, and the door, at last thrown open. The crowd entered.

Hurried explanations ensued; but we could not conceal from the magistrate that a robbery had been planned and nearly effected, and that the real culprits, for whom, at first, Pigtop and I had been mistaken, had escaped.

At length, the master of the inn suggested that perhaps they had passed out of the window, and might be still upon the boarding of the scaffolding. The shutters were hastily thrown open—and, sight of horrors, Joshua Dauntton was discovered hanging by the neck—dead! Sir Reginald gazed for some moments in speechless terror on the horrible spectacle, and then fell back in a death-like swoon.

The body was brought in, and every attempt at resuscitation was useless. He had died, and was judged; may he have found pardon! Some thought that he had hung himself intentionally, so completely had the noose clasped his neck; others, among whom were Pigtop, thought differently. The old sailor was of opinion, from the broken boards that had given way beneath his feet, that, when he had got the noose below his chin, and no lower, that his footing or the scaffolding had failed him; and that, letting go the other end of the rope, it had taken a half hitch, and thus jammed upon the cross pole. However the operation was brought about, he was exceedingly well hung, and the drop represented to perfection. As Pigtop had prophesied, the post-chaise in the shrubbery was turned into a hearse, in order to convey his body to the inn for the coroner's inquest.

"I knew I should live to see him hung," said Pigtop, doggedly, as he bade me good night, when we both turned into our respective rooms for the night, in the house of my father.

Contrary to all expectations, the shock, instead of destroying, seemed to have had the effect of causing Sir Reginald to rally. He lived for six months after, became fully satisfied of my identity; and, just as he was beginning to taste of happiness in the duty and affection of his son, he died, having first

taken every legal precaution to secure me the quiet possession of my large inheritance.

My grief at his decease was neither violent nor prolonged. After his burial, I was on the point of repairing the old mansion, when I found myself involved in three law-suits, which challenged my right to it all. I soon came to a determination as to my plan of action. I paid off all the establishment; and, having got held again of my foster-father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Brandon, I rebuilt the lodge for them comfortably, and there I located them. I shut up the whole of the Hall, excepting a small sitting-room, and two bed-rooms, for Pigtop and myself; and thus we led the lives of recluses, having no other attendants than the Brandons.

By these means I was enabled to reserve all my rents for carrying on my law-suits, without at all impairing the estate. In eighteen years, I thank God, I ruined my three opponents, and they all died in beggary. The year after I came into undisputed possession of my estates, the next heir got a writ issued against me of "*de inquirendo lunatico*," on the ground of the strange and unworthy manner that I, as a baronet with an immense estate, had lived for those last eighteen years. I told my reasons most candidly to the jury, and they found me to be the most sensible man that they had ever heard of, placed in a similar position.

After having thus speedily settled these little matters, as I was fast approaching my fortieth year, I began to alter my style, and live in a manner more befitting my rank and revenues; yet I still held much aloof from all intimacy with my neighbours.

I am now in my forty-first year, and grown corpulent. It is now twenty-one years since I saw my unfortunate parent interred, and I walk about my domains Sir Ralphed to my heart's content—or, more properly speaking, discontent. Old Pigtop is a fixture, for he has now really become old. I cannot call him my friend, for I must venerate him to whom I give that title, and veneration, or even esteem, Pig was never born to inspire. My humble vomanion he is not, for no person in his deportment towards me can be less humble than he. He is as quarrelsome as a lady's lap-dog, and seems never so happy as when he has effectually thwarted my intentions. Prince Hal said of the jolly winebibber Jack, that "he could have better spared a better man." Of Pigtop I am compelled to say more—"I could not spare him at all." He has become necessary to me. He was never very handsome; but now, in his sixty-second year, he is a perfect fright; so, at least, every body tells me, for I don't see it myself.

His duties about my person seem to be continually healthily irritant; the most important one of which is, to keep me a bachelor, and scare away all womankind from Rathelin Hall. He controls my servants, and helps me to spoil them. Such a set of heavy, bloated, good-for-nothing, impudent, and happy dogs, never before fed upon a baronet's substance, contradicted him to his very face, and fought for him behind his back. The females in my establishment bear but a most niggardly proportion to the males—in the ratio of Falstaff, one pennyworth of bread to his many gallons of sack: and these few are the most hideous, pox-marked, blear-eyed damsels that the county could produce—all Pigtop's doing.

Never shall I forget the consternation, the blank dismay, of his countenance, when, one fine, sunshiny morning, I announced to him my intention of installing in the mansion some respectable middle-aged gentlewoman as my housekeeper. It was some time before he could find his speech.

"Blood and thunder! bombs and fury! what have I done, that you should turn me out of your house in my gray hairs! Now, I'm dismantled, as it were, and laid up in ordinary."

"Turn you out, Piggy! what could put that in your foolish noddle?"

"If madam comes in, I cut my cable, and pay off Rathelin Hall right abaft—even if I die in a ditch, and am buried by parish. Take a housekeeper!—oh Lord! oh Lord! oh Lord! I would just as soon see you married, or in your coffin."

"But some such a person is absolutely necessary in an establishment of this extent; so a housekeeper I'll have, of some sort."

"Why the devil need it be a woman, then? why won't a man do—why won't I do?"

"You?"

"Yes, me—Andrew Pigtop. I ask the appointment—do, there's a good Sir Ralph, make it out directly. Clap your signature to it, and let it run as much like a commission as possible. I ask it as a favour. You know the great sacrifices that I have made for you."

"The first time I ever heard of them, upon my honour. Pray, enlighten me."

"Why, you must be convinced, Sir Ralph, if I had not left the navy to attend you all the world over, as the pilot-fish sticks to the shark, I should by this time have been an old post-captain, and very likely C. B. into the bargain."

"You, who remained one quarter of a century a master's mate during an active war, should rush up through the grades of lieutenant and commander to be posted, during another

quarter of profound peace ! But, perhaps, you would have depended upon your great family interest. Well, if I make out your commission as my housekeeper, will you do the duties of the office ?”

“ On course.”

“ And wear the uniform ?”

“ On course, if so be it be such as a man might wear. I bar petticoats and mob-caps, and female thingamies.”

“ Will you carry the keys ?”

“ On course.”

“ And see that the rooms and the passages are well swept, and that the maids are up betimes in the morning ?”

“ D—n them !—on course—certainly.”

“ And, when Lady Aurelia Cosway, and her five beautiful daughters, drive up to the door, will you go and receive them in the hall ; and, making them a profound curtsy, beg to conduct them into a dressing-room ?”

“ No—because, dy’e see, no ladies ever come farther than your door.”

“ And whom may I thank for that ?”

“ Me, assuredly,” said Pigtop, very proudly.

“ I do.”

However, neither Pigtop nor myself carried our points. I did not make out his commission, which vexed him ; but, on the other hand, I did not get me a housekeeper, which, at first, a little vexed me ; but, really, my friend, in an *ex officio* manner, does most of the duties of the office to which he aspired extremely well.

Without vanity, I still preserve my good looks, though I must confess to a little unbecoming obesity of figure ; yet, through my indolence, and the perseverance of Pigtop, and perhaps certain recollections of a green and bright bay in one of the summer islands, I do fear that I am a confirmed bachelor. However, I am not altogether one of those *nati fruges consumere*, for, I can safely say, there is not a pauper on my estate, and that I have considerably added to my paternal acres.

I have always been honest ; and, I shall, acting up to my principles, confess that I am in somewhat bad odour with the neighbouring gentry. The word neighbouring must be understood quite in a rural sense. The nearest resident to myself who can legally write ‘Squire to his name is remote from the Hall about five miles. My neighbours at that distance lie thickly around my estate, among whom I may enumerate a couple of newly-made lords, two magistrates, and several decently estated gentlemen. My retired habits gave them their

first unfavourable impression of my character; and, having no female presiding over my establishment, the ladies were necessarily kept aloof from my celebrate abode.

It is true, that, after my return from a long tour I made with Pigtop, immediately that I had worsted my legal adversaries, at first I received all the dinner invitations that were sent to me, and returned them, by giving gentlemen's parties.

These invitations, however, soon grew less numerous and less frequent, till at length they altogether ceased.

"My Lord Sparrowclose, be known to Mr. Pigtop, my friend; Mr. Pigtop, be known to Lord Sparrowclose." This kind of speech, wherever we went, was received with a grim courtesy.

"Why does he always bring that sea-ruffian about with him?" it was my misfortune often to hear from Lady Mammass and honourable Misses; but, when I ever chanced to hear similar speeches, I always replied, with all manner of deprecating humility, "Because my dear Madam, or Miss, he is my friend."

It must be confessed that Pigtop had not the talent of becoming popular. Not that he was deficient in knowledge of the usages of society, or the courtesies of the *salle-a-manger*, or the drawing-room. But he was obstinate and brusque to the men, and sneering and universally ill-natured to the ladies. He would tell his story after dinner, which, in his technical jargon, was bad enough; but, what was infinitely worse, he always insisted upon explaining it, and then, if he were thwarted, of explaining that explanation. Moreover, he had a decided contempt for all who had not had a nautical education, and an unlimited affection for all manner of alcoholized fluids.

In the presence of the ladies, when he was dragged there, and nothing had that power but his anxiety to take care of me, he was always in my way. No sooner was the white hand of some fascinating young lady, with auburn ringlets shaking from them ambrosial odours, laid with encouraging familiarity upon my arm, than this Pigtop would thrust himself between us, and commence some horrid calumnious tale, dishonourable to the fair sex. But, why, it may be asked, did I endure all this? The answer is very obvious. The mongrel, rough-coated cur, that is so surly to all but its master, is cherished by him the more fondly on account of the general hate. Besides, Pigtop had certainly saved my life once, if not twice; and I was accustomed to him from the habit of years.

I at length became as unpopular as my fidus Achates among

the men. Among the women I was only pitied. But the finishing stroke to my complete isolation from the surrounding society arose from the following circumstances. Our part of the county abounded in game, and, consequently, in poachers. I enrolled myself, soon after I felt myself secure of my estate, in the association to extirpate poaching.

I employed two gamekeepers and four helpers, upon high wages. It would not do. Crack, crack! all night—my plantations raged, and my fences broken down. The expense was enormous, and so was my exasperation. Pigtop sided with my angry feelings. So, night after night, he and I went out watching, in order to apprehend the rascals.

The whole eight of us, at last, after many a weary and wet night, at length fell in with a party of seven. Instead of surrendering upon being summoned, they commenced a regular and very pretty bush-fighting sort of skirmish. Guns were fired on both sides. I, myself, got well stung with several small shot, buried in my person. I confess it with shame, we were beaten, owing to the cowardice of my servants, and our guns taken from us and broken.

Pigtop, who had been unnecessarily violent, even when he saw that violence was no longer of service, was thrashed with the stock of his piece almost to a mummy, and then flung into a muddy pool, where he had well nigh been suffocated. The poachers, having, at length, satisfied their vengeance, withdrew, carrying off their one wounded man.

The next morning I began to reflect seriously upon what I had gained. There was my friend nearly killed, and in bed with a raging fever; myself scarified, and insulted, and defied, and well blooded. The outrage made a great noise; but every one was astonished and offended at the cool and quiet method of my proceedings.

The wounded poacher, the son of a tenant of my own, a most respectable man, had received his mortal summons. I was reviled for interfering to prevent his removal to the county jail. He died some days after, in my presence.

He never betrayed his accomplices. I was much affected by the scene; and was as kind as I could be to his wretched and bereaved parents. Upon which, I received a polite letter from the committee of my neighbours, acquainting me that I was expelled by a unanimous vote from the Society for Eradicating Poaching in the County of ———. To which I returned thanks for the honour done me.

“So, when Pigtop was convalescent, I ordered him to take pen and ink, and calculate the yearly expense for the preservation of my game—when it appeared that, what with the sa-

laries of the worthless cowards called keepers, damages, &c., it exceeded four hundred pounds!

"And we never, Pigtop, get game when we want it in sufficient quantities."

"Never."

"Then, what do we get? what have we got for it?"

"Devilishly well beaten!"

"We must alter our plan.—A brilliant thought strikes me. I'll have more game at command than any man in England!"

So, that day I discharged all my gamekeepers.

"What do you intend to do?" said Pigtop.

"To poach on my own manors."

After a little negotiation, the man relying implicitly on my honour, I obtained an interview with the leader of the gang, now reduced to six.

"Giles Grimjaw," said I, "I am going to give you unlimited license, both by day and by night, to poach over all my manors"—the fellow would not believe me—"upon these conditions, that you supply me with whatever game I want"—he grinned forth his rapture—"that you shall not hurt my fences." He and his party that very morning would set about repairing them, and in repair they would keep them. "Very well; but, mark—you must allow no other gang to poach upon my estate but your own." He should like to see any attempt it. I had bound them to me body and soul. Their lives were at my service.

"I ask nothing of you, Giles, but an honourable fulfilment of your contract. My larder is very empty just now."

The fellow departed, I really believe, as happy as if I had bestowed upon him an estate.

Now, I call this extirpating poaching effectually. I had, by this manœuvre, changed six desperate rascals into as many active and unsalaried gamekeepers. My grounds and my kitchen are the best stocked with game, and I am the man most hated by my neighbours in the county. I am very sorry for the latter predicament, the more especially as they say, that my gamekeepers levy on the surrounding preserves, instead of my own. However, as I must shortly come to town to superintend this biography through the press, I shall thus give time for their angry feelings to subside.

When I live in the metropolis, which I have not visited for so many years, I shall go into society; and, should I find a lady as beautiful and loving as —, I may marry after all, let Pigtop say what he will.

THE END.

